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NORA,

A Michigan Story of 1893.

By

JOSEPH BERT SMILEY.

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SMILEY'S ENTERPRISE,
Galesburg, Mich.
July 1, 1894.

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SMILEY'S ENTERPRISE,
Galesburg, Mich.
JULY 1, 1894.

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1874

NOAH.

Nora.

"I must go, Mr. Stevens, the music's begun.
I've this polka engaged. You request the next one?
Of course,—with much pleasure,—this polka—let's see—
Mr. *Clifford*—I think he is looking for me.
My fan has been broken and I don't see how.
Mr. Clifford is tardy—no, here he comes now."
Both gentlemen bowed with a good-natured glance,
And Nora and Clifford were lost in the dance.
The polka is maybe the *hardest* hard work
~~That young people~~ persist in and never will shirk.
So Nora and Clifford, amid the gay throng
And whirlpool of dancers, went rushing along
Till, pausing at length with the music's last strain,
A-weary in muscle and dizzy in brain,
The two promenaded. He fanned her, the while
They chatted with many a glance and a smile,
A most striking couple, indeed, was this pair,—
This handsome Jim Clifford and Nora St. Clair,
(So thought Nora's mother as, sitting aside,
She beamed on them kindly, with true mother's pride.)

"By the way, Mr. Clifford," said Nora St. Clair,
"Who *is* that strange gentlemen, right over there?
~~He's a real pleasant~~ face and a good-natured smile,
Yet he seems to feel just a bit awkward, the while.
He looks bright and intelligent, to a degree,—
You know all these gentlemen,—who may he be?"
Mr. Clifford beamed down upon Nora St. Clair

1913.

With a calm, condescending and dignified air.
"That is Denton—John Denton—reports for *The Press.*
Their new city editor—hayseed, I guess.
He is '*out in society*,'—*that's* plain to tell,—
And his evening dress doesn't set very well.
He would feel more at home hauling pumpkins, I fear,
Than he does in his broadcloth and fine linen, here."
And Jim Clifford laughed in a mild, pleasing way,
And spoke of the orchestra starting to play,
They dropped Mr. Denton and his presumed faults,
And again they were lost in the maze of the waltz.
And there let us leave them a moment, and see
What the subject of Clifford's remarks seemed to be.

John Denton had been, when at home, as a boy,
Engaged on a farm, in his father's employ,
But always had had an impatient desire
For a different work—something better and higher.
His father was poor, but *some* money had won,
And was willing to spend it in helping his son.
So Denton the younger had managed to gain
A good education as most boys obtain.
He had taught district school, and consented to try
To send in the news to a paper near by.
One summer vacation a start he had made
In a friend's printing-office, had fancied the trade,
Had given up teaching and kept his new place.
For a year and a half he had "held down a case,"
Then turned to reporting, and later his friend
Had bolstered him up with a good recommend

And the night that we meet him he'd been just a week
On the paper of which we have heard Clifford speak,
As full *City Editor*. Friends he had few.
There were only a half-dozen people he knew
In the town; but he thought it was better to go
Well-dressed to the ball he reported, and so
We find him the evening in question. His glance
Follows this one and that one around in the dance
As, a good deal in doubt what to do with his hands,
By a post in the corner he awkwardly stands.
The music has ceased, and Jim Clifford, once more,
Is smiling on Nora and pacing the floor.
"Mr. Clifford," she said, "will you introduce me
To this Mr. Denton? I'm sure he must be
Entertaining. Besides, he has stood there alone
The whole of the evening." If Clifford had known
Things were taking *this* turn he had spoken more slow.
However, there nothing remained but to go
Like a lamb to the slaughter. "Yes, surely," he said
"I should be most delighted," and thereupon led
The lady where Denton stood bashfully there.
Clifford bowed. "Mr. Denton, my friend Miss St. Clair."
John started and blushed in a comical way,
Then managed to bow to the lady and say
He was much pleased to meet her. Jim Clifford stood by
With a sneer on his lips and a look in his eye
Which John quickly noticed. *His* cheeks' ruddy fire
Was partly embarrassment, partially ire
As he took Nora's card, asked permission to fill
In the first empty number, a Lanciers' quadrille,

And the night that we met him he'd been in a week
On the piano of which we have heard CHRIS speak.
As full one minute. Friends he had few.
There were only a half-dozen people he knew
In the town; but he sought it was better to go
With dressed to the ball be deserted, and so
We that this worthy is question. He plunge
Potatoes this one and that one around in the dance
As a good deal to double what to do with the hands,
If a jack to the center locomotively shook
Or person for queen, and the children once sang
A million an Xmas and Indian do Bear
"Sir CHRIS" the and "with-you-motion" on
To this Mr. Lennox." In are to meet he
Invitation. Doctor, to the about them
The whole at the opening." It replied had known
Jimmy were telling this town. In had spoken more him
However, there multiple reunion let by.
Like a hand to the shoulder "my Jimmy," he said
"I should be most indistinct." and Dimmock the
The Jack when Doctor about Lucinda them
Chilled hound "Sir. Jimmy, my friend Jake Sir Chris."
John started and himself is a mental me.
There manage to how to the bell and my
He was much passed to lead Jake. The Chris about to
What's more my Jack and a look to be my
Which when quickly manner. Mr. chance Jack the
Pete until instantaneously, quickly the
At he took Sharp you what pronounce to Mr
In the how many number, a Lennox' inability

Then handed it back with a smile and a bow,
(He had found his assurance and dignity now,)
And just as the silence maintained by the three,
(No subject for discourse there seeming to be,)
Was growing oppressive, and soon to be feared
For the reign of good feeling, Joe Stevens appeared;
Announced that the music was starting to play
And, claiming his polka, took Nora away.
Then John, for an instant, looked sharply at Jim,
And Jim, for a second, stared boldly at him,
And the two had no use for each other at all,
So they started for different parts of the hall.
Jim left the ball room, in search of a drink,
And Denton backed up in the corner to think.
He followed Miss Nora along with his glance
As she played hide-and-seek in the maze of the dance.
Now maybe to see her he vainly would try
As the dense crowd of strangers went hurrying by,
Then anon she'd appear, only flash into view
To be hidden again in a moment or two.
Then he looked for some sign that would serve him the best
To distinguish her quickly from all of the rest.
Nora's costume was white, but so others were, too,
There was *one* other girl who wore ribbons of blue,
But *she* had her hair up on top of her head
While Nora wore *hers* in a low coil, instead.
Thus Denton, while waiting, kept watching the whirl
Of thick-mingling dancers for one little girl.
White dress, then blue ribbons, then hair fastened low,
Now see her, now miss her,—out, in, to and fro,

He followed her motions with quick-changing sight
Like a boatman the glitter of some harbor-light.
Then the polka was finished, the next his quadrille.
In the rush and confusion John Denton stood still
Till the ladies were seated, and then, crossing o'er,
He escorted Miss Nora out on to the floor
Where the dancers were forming. They scarcely were all
In place before sharply there came the first call
Of "*Salute your partners!*" Then busy were they
With rapid manoeuvers in usual way.
The caller the time so completely did fill
That all their attention went to the quadrille.
The moments so closely were used by the dance
That not till its closing had Denton a chance
For talking to Nora an instant, and then
Some dancer was certain to claim her again.
In expressing his pleasure he added, "And yet
I feel, Miss St. Clair, a decided regret
That they kept us in motion the whole quadrille through,
With no chance of becoming acquainted with you."
The fair Nora looked down at the hard, polished floor,
And answered "Our number is six twenty four
West Jefferson street, between Jackson and Paul.
I think you can find it if you choose to call."
Then she looked up at John,—he was laughing outright.
He said "*Thank you*—I'll be there some evening. *Good night.*"
If Nora, that instant, and standing right there,
Could have got her small fingers in John Denton's hair
I presume that the chances are upwards of half
That a bunch of his forelock had paid for that laugh.

As Denton, with hat on, looked in at the door,
He caught sight of Nora again on the floor.
White dress, then blue ribbons, then hair fastened low.
Now see her, now miss her,—in, out, to and fro.
He stood for a moment just watching the whirl
Of the fast-changing dancers for one little girl.
Then he lit his cigar, and in midnight's dull gloom
Through the echoing streets, hurried home to his room.
And all the night long, as he lay on his bed,
The strains of the orchestra rang through his head.
Half sleeping, half waking, half conscious, all night,
Till the crowing cocks heralded morning's gray light,
Still he dreamed of the ball and the great rushing throng
That, crowding and jostling, went surging along,
And one central figure gleamed out from afar
In his dream's dim horizon like some brilliant star.
White dress, then blue ribbons, then hair fastened low.
Now see her, now miss her,—in, out, to and fro,—
His senses still reeling, his brain in a whirl,
With sleep,—and the music,—and one little girl.

When Nora went home with her mother that night,
Fatigue had diminished her eyes' brilliant light.
She was sleepy and tired, and in the black gloom
Of the unlighted hallway she groped to her room.
She lighted the gas, took the flowers from her hair,
Threw her fan on the dresser, her wraps in a chair,
And while pulling out hair-pins this strange little elf
Stood in front of the mirror and talked to herself.
"What *will* that man think? He will know pretty well

That I asked to meet him—I guess he could tell,—
And *then* won't he think it was *awfully* queer
That right after that I invited him here?
I thought he was *bashful*, and awkward, and *he*,
While I tried to assist him, was *laughing* at me!
Oh the miserable *wretch!* He's no feeling at all!
He *laughed* and I HATE him! I—wonder'f—he'll—call."

CHAPTER 2.

Seconds weave into minutes, and not a one stays,
But they spin into hours, and the hours into days,
Until to account for them vainly we try
When the calendar tells us a week has gone by.
Thus Nora had done almost nothing at all
When a week had elapsed since the night of the ball,
On a bright afternoon with her mother she sat,
Engaged in re-trimming a last season's hat,
The while that her mother was fixing a dress.
Their income, of late years, had been growing less
And much making-over was done by the two
Which the mother especially disliked to do;
And as they were working in good earnest there,—
This handsome Miss Nora and Mrs. St. Clair,—
While their needles were busy their tongues were not still,
But they mixed work and gossip, as women-folks will.
Quoth Nora "And now the exuberant Jim
Has asked me to go to *Modjeska* with him."
"And of course you've accepted?" Then Nora,

"Well, no,—

I haven't, and, further, I don't think I'll go."
"Why not?" asked the madam.

"Well, Mother, you see
Jim Clifford is quite too attentive to me
And I don't think I like him."

"And why not, I pray?
You might look about you for many a day
And not find his equal. He's quite wealthy, too.

I believe I'd encourage him if I were you."
"He is *handsome*," said Nora,—"has plenty of pelf.
But he holds too exalted a view of himself,
He is too domineering in every whim,
And I have no intention of marrying him.
So, as that is quite plainly *his* object in view,
I believe I will cut him off short;—*wouldn't you?*"
Then the mother, the sensible Mrs. St. Clair,
Laid down her work with a look of despair.
"You're enough to exhaust all my patience," she said.
"Can I *ever*, my daughter, get into your head
The paramount wisdom of wedding a man
Who will brighten your life as the *rich only can*?
This love-in-a-cottage, with moss-roses sweet,
And honey and kisses, and nothing to eat
Is a beautiful fancy, but never would do
For a well-educated young lady like you.
It is easy to love a young man who has means
As one who has nothing. 'Tis *money* that screens
A woman from hardship. A man may be good,
And love you and care for you all as he should,
But without any means to provide for his wife
He can give little happiness into her life.
I would not have you marry a wealthy ~~young man~~
But you meet ~~men of culture~~ wherever you go
Who are able to give you what your taste demands.
Mr. Clifford is *rich*, and I'm sure at his hands
You'd receive every kindness and comfort. I pray
Don't offend Mr. Clifford and send him away
Till you've thought of this matter, my child, as you should.

It is not for *me*, Nora, but for your own good."
Nora held up the hat she was trimming, and took
At the last-added ribbon a critical look.
"I—wish—I'd—the—cash for a *new* one," said she.
"It is after five, Mother,—I'll go and get tea."
While the two were at supper they chatted away
About various matters, but nothing said they
Any further of marriage, or money, or Jim.
The two were alone, and the lamp burning dim,
And there they still sat when their frugal repast
Had long since been finished, till, startled at last
By the bell, the hall lamp must be lighted before
They would answer the summons and open the door,
And finally, when they'd accomplished all that,
Colonel Warren stood gracefully lifting his hat,
And, entering, straight helped himself to a chair,
And inquired of Nora for Mrs. St. Clair,
(Who had vanished from sight but an instant before,
After helping her daughter unfasten the door).

As the Colonel was not an unusual guest
At the home of these ladies, perhaps I had best
Introduce him at once to the kind reader here
Ere Mrs. St. Clair condescends to appear.
Colonel Warren was fifty,—a man of the world.
To its mercies when only a child he'd been hurled.
He had first been a chore-boy, then later a clerk.
He had minded his business and stuck to his work,
Had gradually risen in civil career
Till the news of Fort Sumter's disgrace reached his ear,

Then off with the army, scarce twenty years old,
He was ardent and fearless,—e'en overly bold,
And, escaping unwounded, had risen in rank
From private to colonel, with no one to thank
But his own valient self. At the close of the war
He had stayed at the work he was best fitted for
In the regular army. In seventy-one,
When the mining excitement had fairly begun,
He'd command of Fort Yuba, where some of the best
And wealthiest mines ever in the south-west
Were opened. The colonel in some way had found,
Like many another, down under the ground
Of dry Arizona a mountain of gold.
Then several years later his claim he had sold,
Resigned his commission, and moved to the east.
By careful investments his wealth had increased
And 'tis thus that we meet him, a batchellor still,
Cultivating his whims, as a batchellor will.

After fixing her frizzes with suitable grace,
And brushing her powder-puff over her face,
And donning a suitable company air,
She entered the parlor,—did Mrs. St. Clair,
And gracefully raising her handsome brown eyes
With the proper amount of apparent surprise.
This good-looking widow extended her hand,
And welcomed the colonel, serenely and bland,
While Nora well knowing *her* part in the play,
Made a fitting excuse and got out of the way.
But scarce had she entered her own chamber, when

She was summoned to answer the door-bell again.
And this time 'twas Denton. She colored up some.
"I wasn't quite sure you intended to come,
But I'm glad that you did. Mr. Denton," said she,
"When gentlemen come here to call upon me
I don't make a practice of taking them in
To spend the whole evening with all of my kin,
But a friend is here calling on Mother, and so,
As there's no other room into which we can go,
With this explanation I'll take you in there."
"I am sure I'd be pleased to meet Mrs. St. Clair
And her friend, but it seems quite untimely in *me*
To interrupt *them*.

"Oh no, not at all.
I am glad you decided to make me a call;—
Walk in Mr. Denton." She opened the door
To the room she had left but a moment before.
Introductions then followed in usual way.
And each one had something quite proper to say.
But the evening's moments dragged slowly along,
With the atmosphere cross-ways and everything wrong.
To be bright and agreeable everyone tried,
And each one was thoroughly dissatisfied
With himself and the others. Some demon in air
Was dictating terms to the company there.
As they wearied themselves with agreeable arts,
While greatly annoyed down deep in their hearts.
Nowhere in the company did Cupid dwell,
And no one had any great secret to tell,
Still had a partition between them been run,

Making *two* parties instead of the *one*,
The demon in air would have been a sweet elf,
And each of the four had enjoyed himself.
The colonel was first to by action confess
That he didn't consider the call a success
When he rose, very early, to make his adieu.
Then Denton, embarrassed, said *he* must go too.
The good-nights were formal, 'mid pleasant small talk,
And the two men together went down the front walk.
Said John, "I'd no way, Sir, of knowing this all,
So you'll have to excuse me for spoiling your call."
The colonel laughed softly. "Its all right," said he,
"You needn't make any excuses to *me*.
Their house is quite small. Never met you I guess.
Think somebody said you report for the *Press*."
"I do," replied Denton. The colonel again.
"I generally know all the newspaper men.
I live at the *Warwick*. It's early, I see.
Have you time to go up there and visit with me?"
"I'd be pleased to," said John. "I am lonesome and blue
The evenings when I have nothing to do."
They ascended a marble stair, only one flight,
Colonel opened the door and at once had a light.
He started a fire that was laid in a grate,
And which crackled and snapped at a right merry rate.
Two big patent rockers he drew to the fire,
Two foot-rests as high as a man could desire.
Then a box of cigars from the mantel he took,
And passed them to John with a questioning look.
John took one, and lit it. Both watched the gray smoke

From their lips curling upward. At length Colonel spoke.
"From the stiff introductions when you came in there
I infer you've but recently met Miss St. Clair."
"Last week was the first, at the Union Club ball."
"You dance then?"
"Yes surely,—were *you* in the hall?"
"No *I* never dance."
"You object to it, then,—
Have you scruples against it?" The colonel again.
"Not many *objections* to dancing I've found,
And neither have I to a merry-go-'round
Where you get on blue horses with staring glass eyes,
And tin ears pricked up in well-varnished surprise;
Then, with what gingerbread the occasion demands,
You smile on your girl and hold one of her hands,
The man turns the crank and the hand-organ starts,
And you smile very wide with the joy in your hearts.
This amusement is harmless, and good, and all that,
But it always struck me as exceedingly flat."
"Why Colonel," said John. "Do you think it is fair
That thing with a fashionable ball to compare?"
"Well,—maybe it isn't," he thoughtfully said
"The merry-go 'round is a long way ahead."
"Tell me how you make *that* out."
"I can't, very well.
Our time is too short, and there's too much to tell."
"Well, indicate *one or two* points you have found
Where a ball is excelled by a merry-go-round."
"As far as I've noticed, the ladies who ride
On these paint-bedaubed steeds, in their innocent pride,

Are *dressed*. On their persons no lustful eyes fall,—
Which is more'n you can say of the fashionable ball."
John Denton was thoughtful. "Perhaps that is so.
It is very late, Colonel, I think I must go."
"Good-night, come up often,"
"I will." Denton said,
Then he hurried away to his room and his bed.

When the callers had gone, the two ladies sat down.
On the brow of the elder a trace of a frown.
"Who is this Mr. Denton—whose son may he be?
What property, prospects, or business has he?"
"I don't know," said Nora, "We met at the ball,
He was real nice to me, and I asked him to call."
"And who introduced you?"
"Jim Clifford."
"Oh well,
He *may* be quite proper, for all we can tell,
But I feel quite determined that you shall not go
With men not *in society*. Well do I know
The suff'ring occasioned by being the bride
Of a person unable to fitly provide."
"Would it not be *worse*, Mamma, beyond any doubt,
To be wed to a man you cared nothing about?"
"You must *learn to*. There's much that experience brings.
When you're older, my daughter, you'll know 'bout these things."
Then they locked up the house. There was nothing more said.
They exchanged their *Good-nights* and went straightway to bed.

III

CHAPTER 3.

Time is not measured, in Life's busy ways,
As the almanac has it, by weeks and by days.
But we figure Life's chapters, their varied course through,
And mark their duration, by things that we do.
Long years, uneventful, like swift moments fly,
While hours, heavy laden, as ages drag by.
So whether a week or a month had gone past
Since the time of the incidents chronicled last
Can make little difference. The next thing that came
To our heroine's life that our notice can claim
Was a drive with Jim Clifford. His prancing bay team
And the excellent sleighing, had made the man seem
More attractive to Nora than usual; so
When he drove up and asked her, she said she would go.

While Nora was dressing without extra care,
Jim sat in the parlor, and Mrs. St. Clair
Of calm, glassy smiles and of compliments bland
Was giving him all that she thought he would stand.
The amount of strained honey a fellow will eat
Depends on his ratio of brains and conceit,
And the lady well knew Clifford's principal store
Was the latter, and so she kept laying on more
With a calmly deliberate, well-practiced touch,
And a very large dose wasn't any too much,
So Jim, as he earnestly listened, began
To conclude that he really was more of a man
Than he'd ever imagined, and, vaguely and dim,

As the Madam talked on, 'twas occurring to him
There were very agreeable ladies. The door
Was opened, and Nora there entered. She wore
A simple brown dress and a cloak trimmed with fur.
The costume was very becoming to her.
She was quite handsome anyway. Figure and face
Were models of shapely, symmetrical grace,
"Now take care of my daughter" purred Mrs. St. Clair.
"It is well you can handle that spirited pair,
For I'm sure to wild antics they'd come very close
With a *less skillful driver*." With this final dose
Jim drove down the street, in his joy and his pride,
While Nora quite modestly sat by his side.
They proceeded in silence for some little while.
Miss Nora was solemn. No light happy smile
Played over her features. Instead, was a trace
Of troubled anxiety shown on her face.
For some hidden reason her spirits would fall,
And she couldn't enjoy the sleighing at all.
But Jim chattered on about dances and balls,
And theatres, dinners, and parties and calls,
And then, waxing sober, "Miss Nora," said he
"Why are you of late, so indifferent to me?
I thought for a time I had won your regard,
Then something unseen must my progress retard,
And you wouldn't go anywhere with me. I pray
Have I chanced to offend you in some careless way?"
The look of anxiety on Nora's face
Increased as she answered with womanly grace,
"No. I'm not offended, as you can well see.

It was just that you grew too attentive to me
And I did not desire it. I'm sure I don't know
How to tell you that better than just not to go."
He couldn't see through it. 'Twas puzzling to Jim
That a girl shouldn't want much attention from *him*.
He was silent for several minutes, and then
He collected his courage and tried it again.
"But I haven't played any deception on you,
As many rich fellows so frequently do.
I have really quite liked you,—yes, truly that's so,—
And you never can tell what *may* come, donchu-know.
My people think I am becoming *too gay*,
And they wish I'd get married,—that's just what they say,—
And I really don't know any young lady who—,
Why what are you laughing at? What pleases you?
Nora's look of anxiety now had all fled
And a smile of amusement had come in its stead.
"I was thinking 'bout England," she quietly said,
"And how strange it must be, from the books I have read.
And the Irish,—how funny,—they make fires of sod.
I suppose Mr. Clifford, that you've been abroad."
The hint was enough, and for nearly an hour
He exhausted all efforts that lay in his power
In describing to Nora the things he had seen
While travelling in Europe. With interest keen
She listened. Whenever he paused to reflect
She asked about something that he'd recollect
And tell her about. So she kept him away
From dangerous topics till homeward went they.
When she told him how much she'd enjoyed the ride,

Her dancing eyes showed that her lips hadn't lied.
And Jim drove away, with all doubt on the shelf,
Still deeper in love with the girl—and himself.
When Nora came in, said her mother to her
"You look very happy, from which I infer
You enjoyed your drive. I am glad, daughter dear,
That to my careful precepts you're now giving ear.
On a prize like Jim Clifford your time is well spent.
He is worth half a million, if he's worth a cent."
Like a dutiful child these remarks Nora heard.
Then she went to her room without saying a word.

With a warm, cherry fire burning brisk in his grate
Colonel Warren sat smoking, a little past eight.
When a step in the hall and a rap at his door
Interrupted his fancies and musings galore.
He shouted "COME IN!" from a vigorous throat,
Then added "Hello Johnny,—take off your coat.
Help yourself to cigars, on the mantel piece there.
This fire is real comf'table. Draw up a chair.
Saw Jimmy out driving with Nora to-day
With his father's fine horses, he's growing quite gay."
"He's a *fool*." muttered Denton. "His head is too big!
He's a feather-brained jay, an insufferable prig."
"Well, why is it, Johnny, a man of pretense,
Of unerring judgement, and good common sense
Will select a fair lady and then will start in
By every device her affections to win,
Yet there's nothing too mean of another to say,
Who selects the same girl, and proceeds the same way?"

"Give it up," replied John—but 'tis easy to see
That when you're talking *logic* you're too much for *me*."
"Well Johnny, you'll grant me, without any doubt,
That the longer you live, why the more you find out.
But regarding the women this hardly is so
For the longer man lives, less about 'em he'll know.
They are ruthless deceivers, wherever they dwell.
They have kept men a-dancing since old Adam fell."
"But how is it, Colonel,—you seem to find
More evil than virtue in woman-kind,
And yet you seek their society still?"
"Yes," said the Colonel, "I always will.
When you think one is true and discover she's not
It *sours* you, but, Johnny, I tell you what,—
There is something about 'em, I may as well own,
Makes it hard for a fellow to leave 'em alone."
"But how is it, Colonel, I once heard you say
That to marry in youth was the only true way;—
That without a good wife, man a wand'rer must be
Like a pilotless ship in tempestuous sea,—
That a bachelor, reckless, life's billows would roam
And that goodness and happiness only meant *Home*,—
That the head of a home was the richest of men.
Now how does it happen that *you* are here, then,
Past fifty, and single?"

"Well Johnny, you see,
I was always so ugly they wouldn't have me."
"No, really, Colonel, all nonsense aside,
With the views you express, why had *you* not a bride
These many years since? You must certainly see

That your preaching and practice but poorly agree."
Then the colonel, half serious, "I'm not a man
Who believes in the single fatality plan.
I've never believed that the rulings of Fate
Have made for each man and each woman one mate,
And that these wander, lonely, Life's dark valley through
Till they meet, then there's something they say or they do
That each knows the other. They clasp heart to heart,
And ten yoke of oxen can't tear 'em apart.
I have never believed in that notion, I say,
But if I'm in error, and that *is* the way,
When the right one is sent that my life shall be blest,
Maybe I'll be content and in clover shall rest.
Now if, on the other hand, *my* view is right,
And we're free moral agents, in our Maker's sight
Without any dictates, or fated behest,
To select our own spouses, as each deemeth best,
Then I have not yet met with the woman, you see,
Whom both heart and judgement commended to me."
Still Denton persisted. "You don't mean to say
That you never have loved?"
"Did I state it that way?"
"Well, no, but your manner of speaking is such
That you naturally leave one inferring as much."
"Well, I *was* in love, Johnny, and desperately, too,
When I guess that I must have been younger than you.
Well, I lost—that is all. It's about thirty years
Since I passed through that whirlwind of anger and tears.
And I've never loved since, although that's not a bar
If I found the right one. Johnny, have a cigar.

I like these Key West-ers. They're better than drink
When my brain is stirred up, and I don't want to think."
The boy realized, as he took the cigar,
He had crowded the colonel a little too far,
So he took up his hat, when the weed was alight,
And then bade the colonel a timely "good night."

IV

CHAPTER 4.

Potatoes are plain living, pastry is high.
Dimes are potatoes, and riches are pie.
Love is good health, which true happiness brings.
Dissapointment is sickness, which rankles and stings.
Now the plan to proceed on, in earth's constant strife,
For the most satisfaction and comfort in life,
Is to find of potatoes your daily supply,
Then care for your health, and go lastly for pie.
If an honest, plain living seems certain to you
Then the next thing you want is a love, pure and true.
Then, easy and happy in home light sublime,
Go after the riches whene'er you have time.
If disease or deformity *is* your hard share,
You can patiently live 'neath the load you must bear,
And all of Life's dainties will help, it is true,
In easing the burden that's fastened on you.
Yet who would deliberately trade away health,
Accepting disease for a mountain of wealth?
Just so, if in marriage you've made a mistake
(Which fully two-thirds of this earth's creatures make)
You can meekly and patiently carry your cross
And wealth can assist you in bearing your loss.
But who calmly and coolly has married for gold,
Who honest affections for money has sold,
Shall find that his castle doth happiness lack,
And all the world's riches can't purchase it back.

"From whom is that letter?" said Mrs. St. Clair

With quite a severe and authorative air.
Said Nora "It's from Mr. Denton, I guess.
The envelope-corner is printed *The Press*."
"A *charming* epistle, I haven't a doubt.
And what has *he*, pray, to address *you* about?"
"He invites me," said Nora. her eyes flashing bright,
"To go to the opera next Monday night."
"He would force himself into good company so?
It is useless, my child, I forbid you to go."
Miss Nora was silent, and meek as could be.
And musingly thoughtful, then "Mother," said she,
"If I don't go with anyone only just Jim
He will think we are terribly in love with him
And then he will slight us. 'Twas Jim himself, too,
Introduced Mr. Denton, and I've tried to do
The polite thing to both of them all the while; so,
As they likely are splendid friends, I didn't know,—
(Here a queer little smile 'round the pretty mouth crept),—
But perhaps, since he's asked me, I'd better accept."
The fair Nora looked down with a calm, pensive air
While the keen, searching glances of Mrs. St. Clair
Were bent full upon her. "I don't know," said she,
"What this Mr. Denton may turn out to be,
He is very presumptuous,—probably poor,—
I've nothing *against* the young man, I am sure,
But I thought he showed signs of attachment for you
Which *no* man of *his* station ever shall do,
And one can't be too careful. Yet if, as you say,
This courtesy came in a casual way
From a friend of Jim Clifford,—'tis not best to lose

His good will. I care not,—proceed as you choose."
Nora looked at her mother and no word she said,
But went to her chamber, sat down on her bed,
And wrote an acceptance, then said with a sigh,
"I told her no story, but *acted* a lie.
Mr. Denton is *lovely*—I like him real well,
Jim Clifford is *horrid*, but I couldn't tell
That to Mamma. She wants to have me marry Jim.
Aint he silly, to-bee what would *I* want of *him*?
I think if girls' mothers just wouldn't act so
Girls wouldn't deceive 'em. Oh dear! I don't know
What to think about Mamma. She wants Jim to call
And its money and *money* and MONEY—that's all."
The smile and the giggle all fled from her face
And a troubled expression returned in its place
As she put on her wraps and went silently out
And posted her letter. Then lingered in doubt
If her action was just, in her conscience' keen sight,
But she made up her mind it was proper and right.

Monday came, so did Denton, and Mrs. St. Clair
Appeared at the door with a most gracious air
And ushered him into the parlor, and he
Was courteously passive and silent, while she
Did the most of the talking. She spoke of how fine
The weather had been, then with calmness benign
She told him how much had the *Press* been improved
Since *his* work began there. But John never moved
He bowed and he smiled when the moment was right,
And he made some remarks that were surely polite.

But his eye-lids were half-closed, as if from the light,
And the left one a little bit more than the right
As he looked at the lady as though he would say
That he understood clearly *her* part in the play.
His searching look wasn't exactly a stare
But 'twas very offensive to Mrs. St. Clair,
Who know that he didn't believe her. In fact
It made little diff'rence how either should act
Their simple, plain presence each other would roil,
And, no more could mingle than water and oil.
Nora's manner was frank and was free from all art
As she came in and asked if 'twas time they should start.
John thought that it was,—he disliked to be late
And it now only lacked a few minutes of eight.
As they went down the walk John remarked "Miss St. Clair
I did not bring a carriage. The evening is fair,
My salary is small, and I thought it but va'n
To assume any style which I cannot maintain."
Nora said "I assure you that that is all right,
I'm accustomed to walk, and esteem it no slight.
Indeed, I consider it much better taste
To walk, such a night, than the money to waste
For a carriage. It must be two months, pretty near,
Since you came to Lansing. Do you like it here?"
"Why yes, very well, though my work is quite new,
And I'm sometimes at loss to know just what to do.
My task is reporting—it's *telling the news*,
And I mustn't put in my opinions and views
With the facts I report. This is quite hard for *me*,
As I have my own notions of all that I see.

Now to-day, for example, it fell to my share
To report an elopement,—a lively affair
Which made much excitement. The parents, of course
Are exceedingly better, resenting, perforce,
Any praise of the bridegroom, while *my* views were quite
In his favor. I think he did perfectly right,
But I didn't dare *say* so. My space I must fill
With a statment of *facts*, and beyond that, keep still."
"Then you favor elopements?" Said John,
"That depends
Upon what sort of reason such action defends."
"*I* don't think so," said Nora. "I think it is *weak*.
It has too much the air of the coward, or sneak."
"But," Denton insisted, "pray what would you do
If your parents persisted in forbidding you
To wed as you wished to. Would you then obey
Their solemn commands, or would you run away?"
"I wouldn't do either. If I was of age,
And if I thought proper myself to engage
To marry a man whom I loved most of all
I would stay there and do it, whate'er should befall."
"If you *weren't* of age, and obedience must find,—"
"I would wait 'till I was,—and perhaps change my mind."
They entered the theatre. Music and light
Enchanted the senses and dazzled the sight.
The evening passed like a beautiful dream,
'Mid satins' rich shimmer and diamonds' gleam.
The music seemed like to a heavenly spell,
And the stage like a corner of some fairy dell
Where beings of fancy have nothing to do

But to sing sweetest strains all their happy lives through.
Not till lowered the curtain upon the last act
Did life again seem like an actual fact.
Then wraps were put on and with slow-moving feet
They came, with the crowd, to the dark, chilly street.
Nora shivered and tightly she clung to John's arm
As if he, in some manner, could keep her blood warm.
No word uttered Denton as onward they sped,
But the way to a fashionable restaurant led,
Where over hot coffee and oysters, they soon
Were talking again to a right lively tune.
"Have you read much of Elliott?" Nora enquired.
John was posted as well as she could have desired.
Then, giving her head a half-coquettish toss,
"Well what do you think of *The Mill on the Floss*?"
"Why? In what particular? How do you mean?"
"Well, about *Maggie Tulliver*."

"She fell between
Two courses of action. She started on one,
Then hadn't the courage for what she had done
And tried to undo it. She fell, from mere *doubt*,—
Too weak to *go through* and too weak to *keep out*.
Had she kept to her purpose to wed Stephen Guest
She'd retained her good name, and had likely been blest
With a long, happy life. Or, if she had but thrown
Her desire to the winds and had let him alone
She had likely recovered,—at least kept her name
Above any sort of suspicion or blame.
But no. She resisted in just such a way
That he thought in the end he would carry the day,

Then advanced to the most risky point she could find,
Where peace was ahead and perdition behind,
Then weakened and turned, in a pitiful plight,
Was misjudged, dishonored, and dropped out of sight
Like the fabled McGinty went down in the pool.
You may call her a martyr,—*I* call her a *fool*."
"You prefer, then, the course of the maiden, you say,
Whose elopement you just were reporting, today?"
"Why surely,—unless, (as you say *you* would do,)
She had courage to stay, and to face the fight through."
"There would be little '*fight*' since that term you would use.
If a girl is of age she may wed as she choose.
I would stick to my course if I'd ever begun.
Marriage is honorable—why should I run?"
Then she looked at her watch and exclaimed. "Do you know
It is very near midnight? We really must go."
The evening was cold, and along the dark way
Their footsteps resounded, as homeward sped they—
When they came to the steps Nora said not a word
'Bout enjoying the evening, and there occurred
No light conversation. She stood where the gleam
Of a distant electric light made her face seem
Lily-white and transparent. An instant she stood,
Looking into the distance, in reflective mood.
Then she held out her hand, saying as she did so,
"Good night, Mr. Denton,"—serenely and low.
As John took her hand, and looked down in her face,
The deep solemn silence, the hour, and the place,
Impelled him to pause in the uncertain light.
He drew her up toward him and answered "Good-night."

Then slowly, so slowly, he lowered his head
(She made no resistance and no word she said),—
And gently and reverently kissed her. A trace
Of tears from her eye-lashes moistened his face,
And seeming to fear e'en a moment to stay,
He whispered "*My Darling!*" and hurried away.
Nora watched him until she could see him no more,
Then slowly and thoughtfully opened the door.

CHAPTER 5.

Now Mrs. St. Clair was a woman who knew
The proper thing always to say and to do.
She was well educated. No place was so fair
But she, with the finest, moved easily there.
She had seen good society all of her life
And had been catered to as a wealthy man's wife.
Then, widowed, had slackened her fast social pace,
While her limited means seemed a falling from grace.
She knew 'bout life's *Upper Crust*, starchy and high,
But nothing she knew of the rest of the pie.
She looked on plain garments with shudder and doubt,
And thought the heart like them. She hadn't found out
That some of the best folks God ever gave life
Wear rags, use bad grammer, and eat with their knife.
She never had known it were best to have lacked
In manners than soul, and yet such is the fact.
If we cannot know manners and honesty too,
Then to cultivate *truth* is the first thing to do.
If blue-jeans and broadcloth don't fit us the same
Then jeans is the one for foundation of fame.
More men have been great who began at the plow
Than who learned, in their boyhood, the dancing-school bow.
These truths are but axioms, simple and bare,
And yet they were unknown to Mrs. St. Clair.
'Tis a wonder how little a woman *can* know
And still be a star in Society's show.

On the morning which followed her theatre *fete*

The other a lifetime. The hours always flew
When they were together, and neither one knew
Where the swift moments went to, or scarce what was said.
They were all to each other, and all else was dead.
Yet only at times like that theatre-night
When the silence, the hour, and the flickering light
Made reverent and holy the moment of bliss
Did he offer to steal from the fair lips a kiss.
Quite oft, through the drag of the winter's dull gloom
John wandered up into the colonel's rich room,
And many and many a long winter night
The two spent together with fire burning bright,
Discussing at leisure, o'er pipe or cigar
In batchelor fashion, events near and far.
The colonel was witty, and usually gay,
With always a plenty of bright things to say.
He told of war incidents,—life in the west,
Wild tales of adventure, by Indians pressed.
And only grew grave when the argument turned
Upon some fellow's *home*. Then the sturdy cheeks burned
With a heavier color. He sometimes would say
"There's no question, Johnny, the only true way
That a man can obtain satisfaction with life
Is to give his devotion to home and to wife."
The colonel knew something of Denton's affair
With Nora, and also was fully aware
That her mother opposed him, and once in awhile,
John saw 'round his mouth a peculiar smile
When Mrs. St. Clair was referred to. 'Twas queer.
John sometimes imagined it looked like a sneer,

Yet the colonel was gracious and very polite
To the lady—in fact he was frequently quite
Attentive. And more than once had it occurred
That John to the colonel had let drop a word
He was going to Nora's—and when he'd arrive
The colonel and Madam had gone for a drive,
The curtains were lowered, the gas dimly shone,
And Nora demurely received him alone.
At ten o'clock John always asked for his hat,
The colonel was always out later than that,
And when from his carriage the madam he led
John was gone, the house dark, and Miss Nora in bed.
Anon John would laugh at the colonel and say
It was better to wed at *this* rather late day
Than never. The colonel was pleasant and bland,
But something there was John could not understand
About the transaction. He plainly could see
That the colonel's good cash the attraction must be
For Mrs. St. Clair, but the colonel himself
Was surely too sharp to be caught for his pelf.
But what the good colonel was trying to do
Was the part of the business John couldn't see through.
While Mrs. St. Clair with suspicion looked on
The slight chance acquaintance of Nora and John,
She really as yet had no sort of a whim
There was any real risk of her caring for him.
So the weeks and the months flew along till, at last,
Spring came, green and fragrant—the winter was past.

Clifford, calling one night, did not find Nora there

And so left a message with Mrs. St. Clair
Requesting that Nora her presence would lend,
And would vouchsafe the honor with him to attend
A May-party hop at the college. These balls
Often shook up the dust of the solemn old halls.
The state could teach farming and that sort of thing,
But the gay youths of Lansing could make the house ring
With occasional dances. When Nora was told
About Jim's invitation she seemed rather cold
In regard to the subject, but said pretty soon
She believed she'd accept,—and the same afternoon
So advised Mr. Clifford. Of course the affair
Met the hearty approval of Mrs. St. Clair,
Who planned Nora's costume with infinite care,
And was thoroughly happy that things had transpired
Exactly, in detail, as she had desired.

The May-day's bright sunlight o'er Lansing was shed,
But Nora was ill, and confined to her bed.
She had had chills and fever the whole night before,
And, instead of the party, was promised some more.
Word was sent to Jim Clifford that Nora was ill
And her evening's engagement unable to fill.
All of this in the *morning*. Along toward night
The lady was feeling a little more bright
And, in tea-gown presenting a most charming sight,
Came down stairs to supper. She looked rather pale
But all the more beautiful. Naught could prevail
To make her look otherwise, as, after tea,
On the sitting-room sofa inactive sat she

Looking out of the window. The small cosy room
Was just growing dusky in twilight's soft gloom
When a pair of black horses drove up to the door,
And the colonel came in. He had not known before
That Nora was ailing, and *his* errand there
Was to pay his addresses to Mrs. St. Clair
And invite her to go for a drive. She declined.
But Nora announced if she so had a mind
She might as well go. *She* felt better, she said,
And within a few moments was going to bed.
So the madam smiled sweetly and said that, of course
If her help was not needed, that altered, perforce,
The question,—then added "And surely you know
If I'm duty-free, Colonel, I'd be *charmed* to go
For a drive, upon *any* occasion, with *you*,—
You *know* that I would,—do you not?" (Yes, he knew
A number of things that he saw in the air,
Which he wasn't explaining to Mrs. St. Clair.)
With his usual calmness he did the polite,
They entered the carriage and drove out of sight.

Nora truly was ill. She had really disigned
To go to the ball, and regretted to find
That her sickness prevented. She rose from her bed
Because she felt better,—just as she had said.
She had played no deceit, and her conscience was clear.
To the time Colonel came she was wholly sincere.
She knew that her mother desired to go,
And was only polite in arranging it so.
In *that* she was honest. But whether she drew

Any sort of conclusion, (or put two and two
Together to judge what perhaps *might* occur)
When the colonel had gone, we can only infer.
Or whether the fact that the colonel came there
May have had aught to do with her combing her hair,
Or changing her mind about going to bed
And fixing two luncheons and napkins instead,—
And whether such acts would some trickery show,
You must judge, gentle reader,—I'm sure *I* don't know.
But be that as it may, at about eight o'clock
There sounded a step, and there came a firm knock.
And Denton was there. Nora opened the door
And surveyed her tall guest, from his hat to the floor.
Her cheeks were all scarlet, her eyes flashing bright.
"John Denton," said she, "why did *you* come *tonight*?"
"Why not?" returned John, with amazement, and slow.
"If you dont want to see me I guess I will go."
"No, no!" exclaimed Nora, "you dont understand.
Come here and I'll tell you." She held out her hand
And took Denton's hat, then continued. "You see
This call will make serious trouble for me.
I had promised to go to the party with Jim,
And then I was sick and I sent word to him
That I wouldn't be able to go. Then tonight
Mamma wouldn't go driving, till I said she might
Just as well if she wished. I was better, I said,
And just in a moment was going to bed.
So she's gone, and now *you've* come, and if she should know,
She would say that I planned it and—"

"*I'd* better go,"

Interrupting the lady John quietly said,
"You've excited and ill, and had best go to bed."
He came closer to her the while he said that,
And gently he took from her fingers his hat,
Then wished her good dreams and was starting to go.
But Nora clung to him, exclaiming "No, No!
You are angry, and you shall not leave me that way.
You should not have come here, but now you must stay."
Of course he remained. It was half after ten
Before either consulted a time-piece again.
Then the shortest adieux were quite hastily said,
John vanished, and Nora got ready for bed.

The colonel was jolly, but Mrs. St. Clair
Was a little concerned about Nora's welfare.
And by ten o'clock very uneasy had grown,
Said she shouldn't have left Nora ill, and alone,
And must really insist on returning. The night
Had been unauspicious. Things hadn't worked right.
Colonel Warren was nervous and uneasy, quite,
As he looked at his watch when they passed a street light.
Ten-thirty. The horses seemed trotting a race.
He steadied them down to a quieter pace.
Then, turning a corner, the house was in sight.
There shone from the sitting-room window a light,
And 'round the next corner there vanished from view
A form Colonel noticed, and thought that he knew.
"Do look, Colonel Warren," said Mrs. St. Clair
"Nora has a bright light in the sitting-room there!
I fear she is ill. Can you go in with me?

Will the horses stand tied till we have time to see
If there's anything needed? Oh, dear! I don't know
Why ever I happened to leave the child so."
They entered the house. Nora sat by the fire
As pretty and cosy as heart could desire.
And calmly proceeded, forthwith, to retire.
The colonel sat down for a moment or two,
Then politely, as ever, he made his adieu.

As Mrs. St. Clair fixed the fire in the grate
She was passively conscious the hour had grown late.
She was also, with some indistinctness, aware
That 'twas odd if Miss Nora had been sitting there
With her pretty hands folded, the whole evening through.
Alone, partly ill, and with nothing to do.
But as she sat down and unfastened her hair
It occurred to this provident Mrs. St. Clair
That the colonel was really more pleasant, by far,
Than the owners of money most generally are,
And that if she could catch the snug fortune he had
In the way of incumbrance *he* wouldn' be bad.
Oh, to be in command of a mansion once more,
With carriages, dresses, and diamonds galore!
She believed with skilled tactics she might capture him.
Then if the fair Nora would just marry Jim
She'd be wholly contented. What unlucky chance
Should have made Nora ill, to stay home from the dance?
By the way—about Nora—she'd almost forgot
That the girl had been up and had frightened her. What
Could possess a sick maiden whose senses were right

To be sitting alone there till that time of night?
"Girls sometimes sit up with young men," murmured she,
"But seldom——*Oh Gracious!* can *that* fellow be
In the habit of coming here? Instantly then
She saw she'd been hoodwinked again and again.
Nora's little deceits all at once she saw through,
And imagined more tricks than the girl ever knew.
Long, long did she ponder, in quandary deep,
And many hours passed ere she thought about sleep.
But a practical woman was Mrs. St. Clair,
And her course was decided upon, then and there.
Chagrined, but determined, her eyes flashing fire,
She locked up the house and prepared to retire.

CHAPTER 6.

To our childhood's young vision—our first mental sight,
Our parents are all that is noble and right.
Their mission to keep us from going astray,
And none, to our notion, as perfect as they.
Oh happy the child who grows older to find
That the sacred home idol he had in his mind
Can lead him on Life's early battle-fields, too,
And set the example for all he should do.
But if, growing older, perchance we should find
That our parents, the same as *all* frail humankind,
Have virtues and failings,—do both right and wrong,—
In some ways are weak and in others are strong,
Let us copy their virtues,—seek out every one,—
And learn by their errors what dangers to shun.
And if, in the total, at Life's closing day,
We shall have lived better and wiser than they,
All that they have accomplished than this shall be less
To prove that *their* living has been a success.

"My daughter, why *will* you deceive me this way?
Said Mrs. St. Clair as at breakfast sat they.
"Have I not always been a good mother to you,
And helped you in all that a mother could do?
Have I ever been harsh to you, Nora my child,
That you turn, in this way, to the reckless and wild?
Oh dear! That I ever have come to the day
When my daughter deceives me in this wicked way!"
Her sentence here faltered, the tears upward crept,
And she buried her face in her kerchief, and wept.

Nora all these reproaches submissively heard.
Respectfully listened, and said not a word.
The mother soon paused in her sobbing, and then,
In grief-laden accents continued again.
"Such disgraceful proceedings! I'd never have thought
That the daughter I've reared and so carefully taught
Would hoodwink her mother by such a base plan,
Holding carnival here with a worthless young man."
Nora's brilliant eyes flashed at this insult to John
But she made no remark and the Madam went on.
"As hard as I've struggled," she sobbed, in her tears,
As hard as I've labored for these twenty years
To rear you, and teach you, and guide you along
To a perfect, true womanhood, noble and strong;
And to fix you a marriage as hard as I've tried
With a gentleman who has the means to provide

For you *every* comfort to humor each whim,
And now—Oh to think—you not only snub him,
But you needs must *deceive* me by underhand play,
In such an intrigueing, dishonorable way!
Oh, I cannot believe 'tis my daughter!" Here, then,
She went into hysterics of weeping, again.
As Nora had listened she seemed stricken dumb,
To her cheeks had the hot color gradually come,
While her brilliant eyes flashed with a dangerous light.
As her mother ceased speaking, she turned deathly white.
And, silent and calm, the girl rose from her chair
And stood like a statue of pale marble there
Till the madam ceased weeping and lifted her head.

And with voice cold and ringing, then "Mother" she said,
"Have you still enough reason remaining to see
When you speak of *dishonor* you're talking to ME?
It is *you* are the *guilty* one,—who, as you say,
Have reared me with care, but would *sell* me away;—
Would *peddle my charms*,—you to *vend* me would try
At auction, to whom has most money to buy!
I'm a *woman*, full grown, and I know very well
That rich gentlemen purchase, and fair women sell,
And the only partition 'twixt honor and shame
Is the *form* of a wedding—'tis *only in name*.
And a wedding for money, without honest love
Is recorded by angels—is written above
In the same blackened volume,—*exactly the same*
As a deed of dishonor, committed in shame!
You reproach me in every way that you can
For an evening spent with an honest young man
While to *marry* a fellow who scarcely is bright,
For *money*, would seem to *you* proper and right.
I say I've done *nothing* deserving of blame,
And I *won't take* your slurs about *intrigue* and *shame*.
And more;—had I loved Mr. Denton, and been
Impelled by that love to commission of sin,
I still, in my shame, would a shining light be
Compared with the creature you must me to be.
Neither way would a woman from blame be exempt,
But the one deserves *pity*,—the *other*, *contempt*.
And if Jim ever comes to see *me*, in this place,
I am going to slam the door *right in his face*,
And if to invite him here you ever dare

I will just *scratch his eyes out.*—SO—NOW—THERE!"
Departing, she closed the door into the hall
So it loosened the plaster, around on the wall,
Then she went to her chamber, where no one was nigh,
And forthwith enjoyed a good long cry.

Sadly, in wonderment, Mrs, St. Clair,
Gazed at the door with a blank, puzzled stare.
"So much like her father, poor man," murmured she,
"My daughter gets no such a temper from *me.*
I would never have dreamed that she *had* such a vein
Of virulance in her 'tis hard to explain.
I have seen her in many a petulent spat,
But I never have heard such a tirade as *that.*
And is *this* the reward that a parent secures
Who in rearing a child every hardship endures?
Must all of this labor and struggle be lost?
Must a pauper now capture a prize of such cost?
No! NEVER! If patience won't guide her aright
I must lead her by force into reasonable light."
So saying, she rose, for the breakfast was through,
And turned to the housework which she had to do.

The colonel sat smoking. A knock at the door,
And Denton there entered, as often before.
'Well Johnny," said Colonel, when greetings were past,
"You hadn't much *time* to spare, night before last."

"Well, no," replied Denton, with curious grin,
'Twas the queerest position I ever was in.
The facts that led up to the muddle, you see,
Were all new and strange information to me,
And it all came so sudden that I couldn't say
Whether 'twas better to go or to stay,
And I then was too much interested to know,
After staying awhile, when 'twas better to go.
But really, Colonel, I want to demand
Some light upon *one* point I don't understand.
What part are you taking in my love affair?
Are you helping *me*, or have *you* interests there?
I do *not mistrust* you, and yet I'm in doubt.
There is so much about it I can't figure out."
The colonel was serious. "Johnny," said he,
"This affair is of total indifference to me
Except in *your* interest. I met you there.
I have spent a few evenings with Mrs. St. Clair,
But I soon became weary, because I could see
That the money was all that she cared about me.
Then by natural process of logic I knew
She was sure to make trouble for Nora and you
As soon as she found what your errand was there.
(For I knew well enough that you loved Miss St. Clair.)
I decided to help you. From all I could see
There was only one method left open to me
And that with her greedy designing to play
And in this manner draw her attention away
From what *you* were doing. I thought that, perchance,
While I was diverting the old lady's glance

You might get a hold on the young lady's heart
So the crash, when it came, couldn't tear you apart.
I didn't know, Johnny, but maybe *one* girl
Might be *true to her lover*,—could go through the whirl
Of a family cyclone, and, standing the shock,
Be as true as cold steel, and as firm as a rock.
I thought perhaps, Johnny, there might be one so,
But I didn't know, Johnny, I didn't know."
He threw his cigar in the grate and arose,
Shook the white ashes off, which had dropped on his clothes.
And went pacing the floor with a quick, nervous vim,
While Denton sat, curiously gazing at him.
Colonel Warren was handsome,—was heavy and tall,
Stood straight as an arrow, yet graceful, withal.
He had broad and square shoulders, his brow high and fair,
Surmounted with plenty of curly gray hair.
His nose was too broad for the Grecian design,
Yet was even and straight, and of perfect outline.
His cheeks were not puffy, and yet were not thin.
Decision was marked in each curve in his chin.
His teeth were remarkably even and white,
And a heavy gray mustache half hid them from sight.
His appearance was striking as, pacing the floor,
A troubled and thoughtful expression he wore.
"Now Johnny," said he, "I have done all I can
In the line I have stated. They've finished *that* plan,
The night before last has completed *that* play,
For the cat's out the bag, and the devil to pay.
Now all that remains is for you to declare
Your love in a plain manner, simple and square,

And the rest lies with *her*,—to decide the affair.
If she loves you, and if she is true to her love
You the envy may be of the angels above.
If her heart is *not* yours then the wound will soon heal,
And a short time will quiet the pain you will feel.
If falsehood and coquetry in her you find,
Your *anger* will be a relief to your mind.
But, Johnny, if still in your sweetheart you see
The kind, loving angel you thought her to be
If she owns that she loves you, and still will not come,
If objecting relations yet keep her lips dumb,
If her heart is still yours and yet wilts in the strife,
Then be careful, my friend, or she'll *ruin your life*.
And Johnny, my boy, if such grief *should* occur
Don't waste your whole life time in thinking of her,
Still waiting, and watching, and cherishing yet
A lingering hope with your bitter regret;
Still wondering and studying whether, perhaps,
When her mother shall die, or when years shall elapse
She then may reward you. I know what I tell,—
Oh, shun that course, Johnny,—it's torment and hell.
By no common sense is that theory backed.
It has no foundation in truth or in fact.
It is only the product of great mental pain,
The weak, crippled hope of a feverish brain.
My boy,——"

"Pardon, Colonel, I don't understand
What circumstance this earnest plea should demand.
My fair lady loves me—for so she has said.
No doubt of her faithfulness enters my head.

I *know* she is true. Only night before last,
When some unpleasant thought had my face overcast,
She, crossing the room, (the rememberance is bliss,)
Said "Dear, I *do* love you," and gave me a kiss.
Now tell me, my friend," (Denton's face was a-glow,)
"For a man of your age must have had chance to know,—
Do you think that a fair maiden ever could live
Who of her own will would such rare present give,
Thus confessing the love you had asked for, and *then*
Reverse her position and snub you again?"
With wide-open eyes, Colonel lifted his head.
"Well Johnny, my *innocent infant*," he said,
"It happens that that was the very same act,
And the *very same words*, as a matter of fact,
Which an angel in form of a maid did bestow
Upon *me* one bright night twenty-eight years ago;
And it 'wasn't a week till she cut me as cold
As a mid-winter icycle,—quietly told
Me I had many traits she admired, but she
Believed she had no further interest in me."
"A thorough-bred liar," said John, "and a shrew."
"No *Sir!*" Colonel said, "she was *honest* and true
To her simple convictions. The same course I've seen
A hundred times since—the girl was just *green*.
They told her some rubbish and lies to deceive,
And she hadn't the sense to know whom to believe.
I *knew* that she *loved* me. I couldn't forget.
I kept waiting and hoping, and *I love her yet.*
And because she *was* good, and *too weak* for the strife
Of malicious influence, she's spoiled my whole life.

Now Johnny, for fear that this *may* be the way
With Nora, pray listen to what I would say.
I have made a *mistake*, and if I were, tonight,
Some thirty years younger, with my present light
Of thought and experience, with such a grief,
I would seek in a different way for relief.
I would make up my mind, be she ever so fine
I had no use for *her* if she wouldn't be mine.
I would *not* wed in haste, but I'd toil with a will
A higher degree in my life's work to fill,
And, rising, myself,--being more of a man
I'd command the respect that success always can;
And search for a woman who'd win my best love
By being in every way, as far *above*
My wabble-kneed sweetheart as I, among men,
Stood shoulders above what I used to be then.
I would be a *success*, and she'd look pretty high
If she married a man who was better than I.
My life should be happy, my wife my queen be,
And bright, happy children should climb on my knee.
And she who had faltered in honest love's track
Could live or could die. I would never look back.
Well, I'm getting too old now, thus wisely to do,
But Johnny this course I would urge upon *you*
With all of my energy. Don't waste your life
For a girl who is *good*, but who won't be your wife.
Go and get Nora's answer, and, having done so,
Let it *settle* the question, at *yes* or at *no*."
John was silent a moment, then said
"I don't know

But that, with those conditions, what you say is so.
Still there lies just this difference between me and you,
That your lady *wabbled*, and my girl is true."
"I hope she is, Johnny, and so will come out,
But don't be too certain,—there's always a doubt.
And supposing she isn't, though none of my biz,—"
"There's no '*sposing she isn't*.—I tell you she is."
Both were silent some minutes, then John

"Colonel, say,
I wish you would tell me about it, some day—
This old love of yours—I would much like to know
What *makes* you distrust all of womankind so.
This world is a good one—is happy and bright.
If it wasn't so late you could tell me tonight."
"I *will* tell you, Johnny, the next time you come
Though for twenty-eight years my lips have been dumb
Upon that sacred subject. I'll tell you the whole
Of the facts which have secretly shrivelled my soul
Till I'm partially crazy: and, Johnny, I'd do
Anything to keep danger of like fate from *you*."
Said John "I believe it, 'tis like you, Sir, quite."
Then shaking hands warmly, they both said "Good night."

CHAPTER 7.

When you make up your mind to a girl to propose
You never can figure, and God only knows
What that woman will say or that woman will do,
Or what is then likely to happen to you.

John called upon Nora. No person can say
If he knew that her mother had just gone away,
All night at the bed of a sick friend to stay,
But such luck *had* fallen to Denton's good lot,
Whether that gentleman knew it or not.
He called upon Nora, and found her at home,
As pretty as ever, well-dressed, and alone.
Denton noticed as soon as she opened the door
That her manner was different than ever before.
Like a bud, in a day she had seemed to unfurl,
Showing more of the *woman* and less of the *girl*.
She was cordial as ever, but somewhat less gay.
And her welcome was said in a womanly way.
A little more quiet her fair hand she gave,
A little more gentle, a little more grave.
Her eyes, always handsome, seemed shining, that night,
With the deep, holy glitter of Heaven's own light.
Her cheeks, always fair, had the delicate hue
Of a fine china vase, with red wine shining through.
Not as artists may fancy are angels above,
But as earth-angels are, when inspired by Love.
The windows were open,—no lamps had been lit.
There was gathering twilight, for lovers most fit.
Nora stood looking out of the window. John placed

His hand very gently upon the girl's waist.
"I have made you a great deal of trouble." he said.
She answered half absently, turning her head,—
"*You* have made me no trouble. I'm such a wild elf
I am *always* in trouble. I—make—it—myself."
The young heart was fuller than Denton could know,
And the first touch of tenderness made the tears flow.
Denton walked 'cross the room, and with eyes wet and dim
Nora stood by the window, still looking at him.
"I had hoped," began John, "that our courtship might last
Until every doubt should have been overcast
With absolute certainty—till you could find,
By thought and at leisure, the state of your mind
In regard to my suit, that, it seems, cannot be,
So, whatever the outcome, there's nothing for me
But to make known my love. Nora, I do not know
What a lover should say, or what fine words should flow,"
(Here he went to the window near where Nora stood)
"But I love you as dearly as ever I could.
My salary is small, but I think it will do,
By managing closely, to take care of two.
Could you bear with me, Nora, the struggle of life?
Do you think you can love me? Will you be my wife?
She laid on his shoulder her poor weary head,
"Are you sure that you want me?" was all that she said.

The lamps had been lighted. John still lingered there.
Nora quietly sat on the arm of his chair.
She said "John, I *do* love you, yet surely you see
How hard is a step like the present for me.

My mother to me has been loving and kind
As anyone's mother you ever could find.
From the first recollection that dawns upon me,
From the time that she coddled me up on her knee,
Her strongest ambition, her principal care
Was always for *me* and my highest welfare
In the light that *she* saw it. I cannot forget
She has lived but for *me*, and is doing so yet.
And even in this, her objection to you.
The best for me still she is trying to do.
No, I'd *not* expect *you*, dear, to see it that way,
And *I* don't agree with her,—but,—as I say,
'Tis a serious matter for any young maid
Her own mother's love for another's to trade.
~~Mamma don't~~ *understand me.* She'd have me all art,
And fashion, and money, and kill my poor heart.
She would govern and dictate my every breath
While my soul, for affection, is starving to death."
John kissed from her eye-lids a gathering tear
And briefly inquired "Well, what then, my dear?"
Then she, with mock dignity—"*What will I do?*
Mr. Denton, I *think*, Sir, that I'll marry you.
But, John, I do *so* dread the struggle and strife
And the shock to poor Mamma,—'twill sadden her life.
And I do feel *so* guilty to so thwart her will
It seems so *ungrateful* to Mamma;—*and still*—"
(She paused, and appeared in a quand'ry to be.)
"I have an idea, John,—listen to me:—
My twenty-first birthday will come pretty soon,
It is only a fortnight—the eighteenth of June.
You will give me till *that* day, my lover,—wont you,

For my final decision on what I will do?
You shall call on that evening and I'll tell you then,
And we never will *doubt* on that question again.
Sometimes meditation quick impulse will cure
And dont you see, dearest, I want to be *sure*."
"Yes Nora," said John, "manage just as you choose,
Your request's within reason I cannot refuse,
Yet I think from the love-light that shines in your eyes
There is little room left for a bitter surprise
At the end of a fortnight." Said she
"I confess
That the end of my study will likely be *yes*.
For when reason can sanction what impulse would say,
When judgement can follow where love leads the way,
It would not *seem* an error to hark to their voice
By intrusting my life to the man of my choice."
The rest of the evening in talking was spent,
And 'twas after eleven before Denton went.

VIII

CHAPTER 8.

If the young man could know what the older man knows
About Life's hidden shadows, and failures, and woes;
Or the old man, possessing this knowledge, could then
Have the energy left to start over again,
This world would be happier. Plain 'tis to see
This desirable state of things never will be
On *this* side of Jordan. The young heart is light.
Reefs hide 'neath the waters; none show up in sight.
Up goes the new canvass aloft to the gale,
On plunges each vessel, to flourish or fail.
Some sink 'neath the billows. Some weaken and float
Till the Harbor of Nothingness catches their boat.
And of those who go through to the Cove of Success
There are some have lost more, there are some have lost less
Of their valuable outfit. Some treasures there be
Which are left far behind to the winds and the sea.
Maybe Honesty goes to the sea-birds some day.
Maybe Virtue is feeble and *that* blows away.
Likely Happiness, fastened by some slender thread,
To the home of the airy sea-fairies has fled.
Then we say in old age, "I am just learning how.
Let me try Life again. I can do better now."
But Death lays his hand on the throttles of men,
And "No," says the angel, "you can't try again."
So I think there's a chance in some heavenly sphere
To profit by lessons that cost us so dear
In the merciless fight of our pilgrimage here.

"Well, Johnny," said Colonel, one evening when

They sat in his sumptuous parlor again,

"I am waiting to hear now you made it. Are you
As sure as you were that your lady is true?"

"Yes, perfectly, Colonel. It seems to me queer
That you ask it that way, with the half of a sneer."
"Did I sneer at her, Johnny? Excuse me, my friend.
No sneer at your lady-love did I intend,
But you're always so sanguine,—so careless and free,—
You compel me to wonder if you are to be
A victim to misplaced affection, like me."
John laughed. "No, my friend,—I am sorry for you.
But as to my Nora, I *know* she is true.
The decision's reserved for a week or two yet
But that makes no difference. I will not fret,
For I *know* my fair lady and so,—don't you see,
There is nothing but happiness waiting for me."
The colonel was thoughtful, then, raising his head,
"Well Johnny, I hope 'twill turn out so," he said.
"Of course it will. Colonel, but tell me what strife
Has made you a cynic and saddened your life.
You remember you promised to tell me." The light
Fell across Colonel's handsome face, fully and bright.
'Twas a *strong* face, and kindly. No ill-temper shown.
In the good-natured smile that was purely his own.
"Am I cynical, Johnny? I don't mean to be; -
Well, I loved and I lost:—the old story, you see.
We were stationed at Louisville. Fighting was through.
We were just waiting there—we had nothing to do.
And some of the people, o'er-looking the muss
Of the great, bloody war, made it pleasant for us.

She had told me she loved me, and though I don't know,
I presume he had asked her and she'd told him so.
And hence had the trouble arisen. He kept
Such vigil I thought that the man never slept.
But one time I beat him. I went there one night
When never so much as a star shed its light
O'er the Stygian landscape. To Prospect had sped
A strong mounted guard, by my best captain led,
To wake up the minister, and to be there
In case the old Rab., learning of the affair,
Should persue and make trouble. A servant took word
To the lady. The latch of the front door I heard
As it stealthily opened. My horses were there.
I put her on one—we had no time to spare—
And just as I turned, to *my* saddle to vault,
A window was raised and her father called "HALT!"

We gave "hops" at the barracks. The best people came.
At our parties a "Yank" and a "Reb" were the same.
I was "Major" at that time. Brass buttons, you see,
Were at premium then. So the ladies liked me.
I was quite a fair dancer, my friends used to say—
And then, shoulder-straps went a mighty long way
In feminine favor. Among all the rest
There was one slender maiden whom I loved the best.
She and her father were living alone.
Her father was "Scotch" clear to the backbone.
And he swore that the girl by his own hand should die
If she ever would marry a "Yank" such as I.
He forebade her to come to our "hops" and, perforce,
Forbade me the house, as a matter of course.

I mounted. We started. But quick as a flash,
Even with the first thrill of the horses' mad dash
I knew the girl *weakened*. Her courage oozed out.
I could just *feel* the presence of weakness and doubt
In the frail little creature so close by my side.
And for almost an hour, in that 'leven mile ride
I reasoned, I argued, I begged and I pled;
But all she would say was she wished she were dead.
As we rode into Prospect, we slackened our pace.
A guard came to meet us and showed us the place.
In the minister's parlor she sank in a chair.
My own trusty soldiers and officers there
Were laughing and jubilant at my success.
Their joy for my happiness hardly was less
Than my own should have been. As the minutes flew past,
My brain was at work—and I had to think fast.
She seemed undecided her lips remained dumb.
It wouldn't be long till her father would come
With a band of his friends,—then the bullets would fly.
I knelt down beside her. "My darling," said I,
Indecision means bloodshed. Say *yes*, or say *no*.
If you *will*, let us hurry,—if not, I will go."
With eyes overflowing she looked up at me.
"I love you, but can't leave my father," said she.
I'm afraid that I swore some,—(I have in my life.)
Then I quietly said to the minister's wife
That the lady was ill. I went out in the street
And could hear the far clatter of iron-shod feet.
My bugler called *Mount*. It was partially light.
Morn was rapidly melting the blackness of night.

In the clear sky were streaks of a dull, leaden hue,
As if Heaven were blending the Gray and the Blue.
Then a squad of Reb. cavalry dashed into view.
My force was the larger. They halted, a few
Rods away, as if questioning what they should do.
I sent a white flag, and expressed a desire
To avoid an engagement,—said we would retire.
They agreed, and we passed them, and leisurely then
We returned to our Louisville barracks again.
Of that night's expedition no one of us spoke,
And before the gray dawn of another day broke
I was sent to Dakota. (The Indians there
Were in need of a little good soldierly care.)
And that was the end of my romance." The smoke
Had left his forgotten cigar as he spoke,
And the curling wreaths faded in air, one by one,
As his love's early hopes of a bright home had done.
After waiting some moments, said Denton "What then?
Did you ever, in after years, see her again?"
Colonel leisurely lighted another cigar,
And then with eyes absently gazing afar,
Said "Yes, I did once. 'Twas in seventy-three.
I was given a furlough, and happened to be
For a few days at Mackinac. 'Twas in July.
The heat up at Mackinac seldom is high.
The ugly old Reb. and his daughter were there
For a fortnight of rest and a breath of fresh air.
I met her one evening, by chance, on the beach.
The meeting was equally startling to each.
She looked little older than eight years before.

She was slender and beautiful, just as of yore.
'Miss Andrews, I think,' remarked I, with a bow,
'Or has that name changed to another, ere now?'
'No Major,' she said, 'it is Miss Andrews yet.
Did you think me a woman to so soon forget?'
'Well then,' I rejoined, 'you would possibly go
For a walk, as of old, for half hour or so.'
(I had on my uniform) 'Ah,' murmured she,
'You have risen in rank since the time you knew me.'
'*Colonel* now,' I replied 'But inform me,' said I

Have you altered your mind in the eight years gone by?
Do you look at our romance in just the same light?
Shall we take up our love, where we left it that night?
She looked in my face with a happy surprise.
The tears came again to her glorious eyes.
'Why Colonel, I *always* have loved you,' said she,
'And I now have some hope that my father may be
Sufficiently softened to let us be wed.
Last night you passed by and he watched you and said,
You reminded him *some* of the impudent Yank
Who carried me off, in that Louisville prank.
He spoke of the run-away, then he said—well,
Perhaps he was foolish—we never could tell.
Go and talk with him, Colonel,—perhaps he'll relent.
And the rest of our lives may be happily spent.'
I stared at the woman. 'Jane Andrews,' I said,
'It was never your father I wanted to wed.
It was *you* that I loved in the old days of yore,
It is *you* I'm addressing this evening once more.
This question deals only with *me* and with *you*.

With your *father*, at present, I've nothing to do.
When I courted you first, in our love's early day,
He issued his orders. You sent me away.
You chose to obey his unreasoning whim.
Our two lives you darkened to gratify him.
You thus chose between us. This evening, again,
You re-state the verdict which you declared then.
You will cling to your father. Then, if it should be,
That his whim is favor'ble, you'll marry me.
Then *he's* in command of *my home*,—don't you see?
He sits by my hearthstone, a dark shadow dim,
And if he and I quarrel, why you side with him.
No, *I never will do it!* If I win your hand
In our home *you and I* will forever command.
He will always be welcomed with kindness, no doubt,
But if he tries to dictate he'll have to get out.
I'd be happy and proud, *now*, to make you my bride.
He has nothing to do with it—*you* must decide.'
She seemed dazed and puzzled. 'Why, how can I wed
A man who will turn out my father?' she said.
I began to grow angry. I tried to explain
But the labor expended was wholly in vain.
The rampant old Reb. was her tyrant and prince.
So I bade her good night and I've not seen her since."
"And this is the burden of heart-wreck and strife
Which has saddened you, Colonel, and darkened your life?"
"Yes. There was one way to have brightened my fate,
Which I did not discover until 'twas too late.
I always liked women. I turned from the strife
Of my bitter regret to a sensuous life.

Not to low dissipation, but rather by way
Of intrigues and liasons,—lived very gay,
Attempting in pleasure to drown the regret
Of a grief so intense that I could not forget.
But passion is life's only fountain and source
To make life again, and, in natural course,
The springs which make up the great tide as a whole
Come from every fibre of heart and of soul,—
The sublime with the sensual so close a part
That you can't reach the sense without touching the heart.
And so with each mistress I soon grew to feel
A true, honest interest for her future weal.
And every intrigue wound up in a strife
To point to the woman a more honest life;
Till I found the best pleasure that women could give
Was to train up my conscience and teach me to *live*
I never drank heavily. Liquor, I found,
Was the key-note to passion, and *much* if it drowned
The soul which, when natural, with lust interlocks,
Constituting the difference 'tween man and an ox.
I have left dissipation, in all forms, because
'Twouldn't jibe with my mental and physical laws.
So I live here alone as you see me, my boy,
And I have the surroundings that I can enjoy
Which money can purchase. I'm sordid, you see,
And it's no fun for young folks to visit with me.
I have wondered sometimes why a kind loving God
Should have placed so much passion in creatures of sod.
Unappeased passion hardens the finest, best part
Of a man's social nature, and shrivels his heart.

Makes him ugly and sordid, ill-natured and stern,
So that bright, happy people away from him turn.
Passion, starved and in prison, shuns all that is fair.
Passion, wild, running rampant, spreads death everywhere.
But I don't try to solve it, and don't go about
Blaming God for arrangements I can't figure out.
But I've wondered how many of people I know
Have a sacred lost love in their hearts,—if below
The affable manner their friends know them by
They've a deep, bitter sorrow, the same as have I:
How many there are, if their secrets we knew,
Who have done that most wise thing which *I could'nt do*;—
How many whose hearts have been turned into stone
Have escaped the discomforts of living alone
By a marriage that reason and logic could tell
Was fitting and proper, and that would be well.
I have wondered how often the ones who've so wed
May have longed for the kiss of the old love instead;
And whether, at times when they're weary and blue,
Their thoughts wander backward, the dreary years through,
And review early hopes with a smile and a sigh.
These ill-married people are worse off than I."
John Denton was thoughtful, then "Colonel" he said,
Don't you think that for *any* man never to wed,
No matter by *what* cause, is still a mistake?
Don't you think a new love reparation should make?
Should a whole life be sacrificed,—ruined, forsooth,
For a woman who saddened the heart in its youth?"
"It *is* a mistake, Johnny, none can deny,
And which no one can realize better than I.

And if your present love meets the same bitter fate
You must act on the lesson which *I* learned too late.
If your fair lady Nora will not be your bride
Do not turn to fast living, your sorrow to hide.
Do not wed in a hurry some one you're above
Don't take lust for affection, or sadness for love,
Nor yet do not wait till your life's closing day
For the poor, weak affection that turned you away.
It is not worth the waiting, or your thought to spend.
Who is weak at the start will be weak to the end.
There is only one course which is manly and strong.
That's to set your teeth tighter and *go right along.*
Let your courage grow more and your sorrow grow less,
As, year after year, you come nearer Success.
Then, as women of culture grow gracious to you,
Select from the thousands who're noble and true
A wife who in every way is *above*
The whole of the outfit you *used* to call 'love'.
Get a woman of *strength*, both of body and mind,
Who, when *she* says she loves you, you know where to find.
The country is *full of them*,—all the land through,—
These women of *courage*,—strong, noble, and true.
Select *this* course, Johnny, if bitter your fate.
Do not spend your life weeping, until it's too late.
Thus a proud happy king in the world you will be,
And not a mere blot on the landscape,—like me."
John Denton was silent a moment or two,
Then "Colonel," he answered "your logic is *true.*
It is certain as daylight and sound as can be,
But your warning is needless, my dear sir, to *me*,

For my Nora is constant and true,—don't you see?"
"Well, I *hope* so, my boy, and I *think she is*, too,
I am hoping for smoothe sailing, Johnny, for you.
But remember, the *pinch hasn't come yet. I* know
That woman's a terror, and that she will go
To *any* length, almost, to carry the day,
Nor would Nora's own happiness stand in the way
For a moment. I think that the girl will be true,
In what she has led you to think she will do,
But I don't feel as certain about it as you."
Said Denton, "The battle will come out all right.
But, Colonel, 'tis late—I must bid you good-night."
Colonel 'rose and accompanied him to the door,
Saying "Johnny, be careful. I warn you once more.
Pin not your hope *too* high, and trust not too strong.
You'll have farther to fall if the battle goes wrong.
God knows that I wish you success in the fight.
May good luck and vict'ry be with you. Good-night."

CHAPTER 9.

Go and study the men who their conscience neglect,—
The intellects ruined, the lives that are wreked,—
Look *under* the desperate, dare-devil laugh
With which, in their revels, their liquor they quaff,
Look into their hearts, and find out if you can,
What makes a fiend out of a promising man,
Go hunt up the *reasons*, where sin darkly rolls,
Go search out the *causes*, deep down in their souls.
How often you'll find the first downward step came
From a false, fickle *woman*. Let her share the blame.
Then hunt up the men who, unselfish and true,
Have done with whole heart what their hands found to do,
Who are living examples, devoted and strong,
Of the power of the right and the failure of wrong.
Look *under* the cool self-possession, and see
What the bright beacon light of that man's heart may be,
Go search through his life for the strong, gentle voice
Which impels him to keep to the right as his choice.
You will find that the pilot who counsels his ways
Is a staunch, loving *woman*. To her be the praise.

Notwithstanding the certainty John had expressed
That his love-affair's outcome could be but the best,
His private anxiety never had ceased,
But, approaching the crisis, it greatly increased.
He was outwardly tranquil, and he would have said
That he never was calmer in heart and in head.
Yet, the day, drawing near, for deciding his fate

Found his mind in a thoroughly turbulent state.
As the finish drew near, of the trying two weeks
The fire of excitement burned bright in his cheeks.
He 'rose somewhat earlier, worked harder, too,
Was nervously active, his labor hours through.
Still if you had asked him the cause of this strife
He'd have said he was tranquil as e'er in his life.
The two weeks of waiting had slowly crawled past,
It was June and the night of the Eighteenth, at last.
As Denton walked down town, he suddenly thought
About Mrs. St. Clair. He was certain he ought
To have planned with Miss Nora, or figured some play
So the madam would *surely* be out of the way.
He stood on the office steps, *thinking*. His glance
Looked over a neighboring cross street, by chance,
And there went the Colonel, his splendid black pair,
And smiling beside him sat Mrs. St. Clair.
The colonel was pointing, with interest strong,
To the beautiful landscape, while driving along.
And explaining its features of interest, yet
There was one little item he seemed to forget.
He omitted to state to the fair lady why,
As he came past the corner, and caught Denton's eye,
He drew his mouth sideways a little a-wry.
John had felt rather solemn when first standing there,
Then his blues yielded place to a wondering stare
When he noticed the colonel and Mrs. St. Clair.
Then his load of anxiety lightened by half
And he straightway indulged in a long, hearty laugh.
"That colonel's a *prince*!" to himself murmured he,

Then hurried away the fair Nora to see.

The St. Clairs' humble cottage was cozy and neat.
It was white, with green blinds, and stood back from the street
In a cluster of maples, whose broad branches made,
Through the warm months of summer, a most grateful shade.
Nora's favorite nook, where her hammock was swung,
Was beneath a huge tree where the bows overhung.
'Twas a beautiful spot—a secluded one, too,
For a wide spreading lilac half hid it from view.
On this quiet June evening there came through the gloom
Of the gathering twilight the floating perfume
Which in flowers of summer doth ever abide.
The roses were nodding on every side.
And of all the fair roses in that nook so bright
The fairest of all, on this balmy June night
Was the beautiful girl, in her hammock who swung,
Awaiting her lover, the roses among.
So swinging she idly the moments beguiled,
In resting and thinking,—and drowsily smiled.
And the place was so still, and the perfume so deep
And her eyelids so heavy, she fell fast asleep,
And there Denton found her. He watched her awhile
As her dainty lips moved with a flickering smile,
Then he bent down and kissed her. Her eyes opened wide.
"Is it you, dear?" she murmured—"Sit here by my side."
I must have been sleeping—I didn't mean to.
I was happy this evening, John, waiting for you."
"Then I don't need to fear your decision, I guess."
"No, dearest," she whispered, my answer is *yes*.

When the evening waxed late and John started to go
Nora, clinging close to him, said "Dearest, I know
In the fortnight just past you have been full of doubt.
You have worried much, John, and been anxious about
The *strength* of my love, and devotion to you.
And whether I would to my lover be true.
That worry, till now, you have had to endure,
There was so much to think of I couldn't be sure.
But *now*, John, *that* worry must no longer irk.
The whole of your strength must go into your *work*.
I will *help* you—not hinder—all coming months through.
Do not doubt any more, dearest,—*I will be true.*
And when you are tired, dear, when you are blue,
Come always to me, John, and I'll comfort you.
In success I'll assist your ambition and pride,
In your failures I'm ready to *work* by your side.
To-day my command of my life has begun
To-day is my birthday, and I'm twenty-one.
I have thought it all over, the duty I owe
To my mother—the farthest in reason I'd go
To please her, but weak in this case, is her sight.
I know she is wrong, and I know I am right.
So I'm ready, my lover, to go through the strife.
If you're sure that you want me I *will* be your wife."
John kissed her, and thanked her. Kind reader, I pray
From that scene, holy, sacred, let us come away.
True love is too rare for a line or a hint
To intrude on its privacy, even in print.

For you I can go through a whole world of strife.
Tomorrow the fight will begin, but this life
Is only a battle, my lover, at best,
And *I'll fight for the love I have this day confessed.*
For when reason can sanction what impulse would say,
When judgement can follow where love leads the way,
True hearts remain firm, through the most bitter fight,
And the marriage that follows is honest and right."
Said Denton "This world would be happier, far,
There would be less of trouble, its progress to mar,
If *every* young woman were plucky and true
And kind, and courageous, my darling, like you."
Two young lives were happy, two hearts very light
As Denton and Nora exchanged their Good-night.

Nora came down to breakfast calm, gentle, and fair,
But she had a decided and positive air.
She asked how her mother enjoyed her drive,
She helped with the work, and was keenly alive
To all that her mother desired. All through
The hours of the morning her nimble hands flew.
With the work of the kitchen the swift moments fled
And the forenoon had vanished and nothing been said
Of a personal nature. In kneading some bread
The madam just paused for a moment to say
To Nora, who labored a few feet away,
"I suppose Mr. Denton called on you last night.
He 'most always sneaks 'round here when I'm out of sight."
Nora's cheeks colored scarlet, her eyes flashing fire,
But she made no remark till she'd conquered her ire.

Then quietly answered "It does seem to me
That he *was* here to call. I presume he must be
Quite lonely at times, for last evening he said
He supposed he'd be happier when we were wed."
So saying, she balanced a pie in the air
On the tips of three fingers too slender and fair
For dough to disfigure them. Calm and sedate
She ran a slim knife 'round the edge of the plate
With the touch of an artist. Her mother's good bread
Was instantly left. "WHAT IS THAT?"
"He just said
He supposed he'd be happier when we were wed."
"*Did he ask you to marry him?*" she fairly screamed.
"Oh the *miserable* wretch, why I never had *dreamed*
His audacity ever would reach *such* degree.
Well,—*I* will take care of *him*,—leave him to me."
"I've attended to that, Mother,—fixed it for life,
I have told Mr. Denton that I'll be his wife."
The madam turned pale. "Why my daughter," said she,
"What nonsense is this you are telling to me.
You shall *not* do an act so erratic and wild!
A wedding like that would *disgrace* us, my child!"
Nora stopped her work also,—the pie in her hand,—
Saying "Mother, you may just as well understand
That while I appreciate fully the fact
Of your care, and your kindness, and every act
Of motherly love and attention; while, too,
There is nothing in reason that I would not do
To please you, still marriage is *one* thing on earth
In which everyone is entitled by birth

To a freedom of choice. Every woman or man
Should marry the person he loves,—if he can.
Now I love John Denton. John Denton loves me.
And *John Denton I'm going to marry*;——you see?"
She set down the pie with a positive air
And fluted its edges, while Mrs. St. Clair
Stood in silent reflection a moment, and then
The madam indignantly set forth again.
"You never shall wed, under *my* roof, that man,
And as to *eloping*, if *that* be your plan,
If desperate measures you *force*, by *your* part,
You shall both be arrested, the moment you start.
If reason and kindness are naught in your sight,
There's a *law* in the land for *enforcing* the right.
You're a bad, disobedient, ungrateful child.
I'll subdue you with harsh methods, failing with mild.
Oh to think that *my* daughter such counsel has kept!"
And she covered her face with her apron, and wept.
Nora picked up a knife, with a shrug and a sigh,
And carved little holes in the top of the pie,
For the steam to escape through. When Mrs. St. Clair
Finished weeping, her look was of martyred despair.
Nora said "Listen, Mother,—I'll not deceive you,
But I'll tell you now just what I'm going to do.
There will be no elopement. We much would prefer
That here at your home should the wedding occur,
But if, when the day for our marriage is set,
In regard to the matter you're obstinate yet,
At the minister's house will the services be,
With no secret about it. Two people, you see,

Of age, and both single, are given by law
The right to be married, and you never saw
Any power in the land can their promise undo
If they have any *courage* and both remain true.
Now if you've an idea of disturbing the peace,
Mr. Denton will speak to the Chief of Police,
And will send a patrol and some officers, so
To be sure all is still and the services go,
For when reason can sanction what impulse would say,
When judgement can follow where love leads the way
True lovers stand firm through the bitterest fight.
And the marriage that follows is proper and right,
And I love John Denton, John Denton loves me,
And *John Denton I'm going to wed!* DO YOU SEE?"
She then left her mother, and also the pie,
And went to her room for another good cry.

CHAPTER 10.

Mary Livermore, mistress of speech and of pen,
Remarked oftentimes that the more she knew men
The more she loved dogs. There is many a man
Who could set forth his views on a similar plan,
And could state, with strong feeling and interest keen,
From the depths of his soul, that the more he had seen
Of women, the more he loved horses. Each sex
Has much in its nature the other to vex.
We are likely to judge of the brave or the fair
By the color of glasses we happen to wear,
Our views, dark or light, of a whole sex has grown
From some little love affair, purely our own.
Like the fabled blind men and the elephant, so
We judge the whole world by the bit that we know.

Said John to the colonel, "I told you I knew
In spite of your warnings, that Nora was true."
In the colonel's apartments as often before,
The two men sat smoking, the same as of yore.
Said the colonel "Excuse me—I fear to offend—
But I want to inform you, my verdant young friend,
You knew *nothing whatever about it.* Your life
Has never seen any real hardship or strife,
So you think none exists. You are somewhat inclined
To think any person of cynical mind
Who isn't as lucky as you. There are men,
And I've run across them again and again,
Who skip this life's troubles, and seem to go through
To an easy success in whatever they do,

And glide smoothly on, with no effort at all,
While thousands of smarter men struggle and fall.
I rejoice in your fortune, but, Johnny, don't say
That you *know* a girl's true till she's tested."

"You may
Be correct in that, Colonel."

"Yes, Johnny, my boy.
There is nothing for me to more fully enjoy
Than to see *you* made happy. Since I am long through
With hope for my own peace, the next best to do
For my own satisfaction, is working for you.
But listen, now, Johnny,—this fight is not done.
In fact, I believe it is only begun.
I tell you that woman's a fury."

"But how,
Pray tell me, my friend, can she injure me now?"
"It is hard to determine, to certain degree,
But I think her next movement would naturally be
To apparently sanction the fair Nora's choice,
Then, meek and submissive, with sweet, honeyed voice,
Regret to Miss Nora, the newly found fact.
That you have deceived her. This claim will be backed
By alleged misdemeanors of yours, and of these
Some gross immorality likely will please
Her very shrewd fancy."

"But no one can find
Anything in my record that—"

"*She* wouldn't mind
Such trifles as facts, when her fancy could tell
Some nice little fiction would answer as well."

'Do you think she would *lie*?"

"She *prefers* lies to tell

At times when the truth would come out just as well."
"Oh, Colonel, you're cynical."

"Now, we will see.
Your path may be smooth, but I want you to be
Ever on the alert. When you feel any doubt,
Come to me with it, Johnny,—we'll figure it out."
"Colonel, how can I thank you? You seem to have thrown
As much thought on this matter as if 'twere your own.
You're as staunch a friend to me—as watchful and true,
And help me as much as a *father* could do.
I cannot see the *motive*. There's nothing I've done
To merit such kindness, since first it begun."
John stood with his hat on, preparing to go.
The colonel still smoked, as he paced to and fro.
"It is *selfishness*, Johnny,—a man cannot live
Without *some* friend, of *some* sort, to whom he can give
His thought and affection. 'Tis common with men
To lavish their favors on horses—and then
I *have* known of cases, at times in my life,
Where a man was encouraged to care for—*his wife*.
Yours promised to be such an instance, you see,
So to help matters on is a pleasure to me.
When a man covets things which he cannot enjoy
They're a pleasure to him *second-handed*, my boy.
Come up any time you need help in the fight."
"I will,—and a thousand thanks, Colonel. Good-night."

As the weeks of the summer flew swiftly from sight
They left few events to remember their flight.
To the little white cottage the colonel still came,—
Not oft, but at intervals,—nearly the same
As usual. Madam was courting him yet
But made little headway. Anon he'd forget
To call upon her for a fortnight, and then
Would come and invite her out driving again.
Regarding John Denton, poor Mrs. St. Clair
Appeared to have yielded in utter despair.
He called every Sunday, and took Nora out
To various parties and concerts. His doubt
Of the Madam's good faith had almost disappeared.
As the goal of his fond love's ambition he neared.
The madam was kind to her daughter. Each move
Was of deepest affection and motherly love.
So good and forgiving was Mrs. St. Clair
She beamed upon John with a motherly air
Though with some resignation. The colonel and John
Discussed the arrangements each week, pro and con,
And smoked their cigars much as usual. Both
Were calm and contented. The colonel was loth
To advance his suspicions. In August he planned
To go to the Fair, but a business demand
Of an unforseen nature delayed him at home,
And so Denton went to Chicago alone,
While to visit it later the colonel would try.
(The madam and Nora had gone in July).
Thus ended the summer, as months often go,
And what they've accomplished there's none of us know.

One night in September, through rain and through gloom
There came bolting into the colonel's rich room
John Denton. His face wore a look of despair
As, hurling his mackintosh onto a chair,
He sank on the lounge. "I'm beaten!" said he.
"At *this* late day Nora is *questioning* me!
Curse the luck anyhow!" Silence profound
Reigned for some seconds th' appartment around.
Then the colonel looked up, slightly turning his head.
"Well, Johnny, what is there about it?" he said.
"I went up there tonight, and she said I possessed
Bad qualities, of which she never had guessed,—
Said that she had stood by me against her own kin
And now she felt *wretched* to learn of my sin.
She said that her mother was kind as could be
And didn't object any more, and that she
Had nothing to do with this trouble."
"You say
That she *jilted* you, Johnny, and sent you away?"
"Why no,—not exactly. She felt *hurt*, she said
To discover the man she had promised to wed
Had broken his faith."
"Did the lady say what
Your offenses consisted of?"
"No, she did not."
"Did you *ask* her?"
"Yes, surely."
"And wouldn't she tell?"
"No. She only would say that I *knew very well*."
"Do you have any notion to what she alludes?"

"No. Love like I've given her wholly precludes
Any immoral conduct, or such thought in mind
Even if, for a moment, I'd felt so inclined."
The colonel leaned back in his large easy chair,
Blew a column of curling white smoke in the air.
"She's a *real pleasant lady,*—this Mrs. St. Clair."
John stared in amazement. "You think it is *she?*"
"*Of course it is,* Johnny,—who else could it be?"
"But how can I manage? Pray, what can I do?"
"Just wait a few days, my boy.—*I'll fight this through!*"

A day or two later, the colonel's black pair
Drove up to the cottage, and Mrs. St. Clair,
All powder and smiles, soon was seated beside
Her intended victim, to go for a ride.
Said the colonel, "I've rather been thinking, of late,
That to live all alone is a very hard fate,
And I——"
"Oh, *my dear Colonel—it surely must* be
To a gentleman. It is indeed so to me!"
And she nestled up closer. The colonel did seem
To require his attention to manage his team
Then resumed, "I was saying,—oh yes, by the way,
This young Mr. Denton the rumors do say
Is going to marry your daughter. Is he
The man of *position* that *your* son should be?"
"*They shall never be married!*" He made the child say
She would marry him sometime this fall anyway.
The impudent villain! Indeed we shall see
Whether such an imposter shall circumvent *me!*"

"You intend to prevent it?"

"Indeed! That I do!

And fortunate was I the other day too.
There is old Mrs. Shattock who keeps the hotel
Where the young man is stopping and doesn't she tell
That he *flirts with a waitress!* I haven't a doubt
He's a *wicked young man*, if the truth were found out.
So I told that to Nora. I guess we shall see
If this impudent fellow will out-figure *me*.
No, Colonel, my daughter shall not so disgrace
Us all. She shall marry a *high social place*.
You need have no fears about *that*," and she smiled
So sweetly it would have a statue beguiled.
But the colonel was suddenly silent. No trace
Of his thoughts or emotions appeared on his face.
He shortly discovered, much to his chagrin
That the off horse was lame and would have to go in.
He apologized,—said he was loth to deprive
Himself of such pleasure. There ended the drive.

Mrs. Shattock was thin. Her most earnest demand
Was that people about her should all understand
She was just as good's anyone. Having fears, lest
Some person should fail to be duly impressed
With this fact, she explained it to everyone.
Her duties at supper were just fairly done
One night in September, when somebody said
That a gentleman wanted to see her. She sped
To the parlor, and there found a tall, handsome man,
Who was built a good deal on the soldierly plan.

As she entered the parlor the stranger arose
And bowed. "Mrs. Shattock," he said, "I suppose.
Madam, my name is Warren. I called upon you
To find out, if possible, whether you knew
About one John Denton,—to learn, if I can,
The real moral character of the young man."
"I haint never seen nothin' thet looked the least queer.
Ef I hed, you can bet he would *git out o'here.*
My house is *respectable*, I'd have you know,
I'm as good as the rest of I *aint* hed no show
Fer fanciful learnin'. My grandfather——"
"Yes,
That's a comforting knowledge for one, I confess.
I knew of your family's position, and so
Came to you for the facts that I wanted to know,
Depending, of course, (with the deepest respect)
I'd secure the facts promptly, and wholly correct."
The fair lady melted. "I'll give up," said she,
Any facts about him thet is knowin' to me."
"Many thanks, Madam, you are exceedingly kind.
Now you say, I believe, that you don't ever find
Anything about Denton which ought not to be?"
Said the lady, emphatically. "That's the idee."
"Well, now, did you ever tell anyone here
He was flirting with waitresses?" She rubbed her ear
With the palm of her hand, as she answered "Well, there!
I guess I said somethin' to Mrs. St. Clair,
She called here one day, (I don't know jest what fer,
'Cause I aint never had no acquaintance 'th her),
Though I'm jest as good's she is. My grandfather,——GEE!

There's a feller a-settin there I didn't see!"
"Yes," said the colonel, "he's waiting for me."
"You were saying that Mrs. St. Clair called."

"Yes. She
Asked about Mr. Denton, es clost es could be
An' we set on the steps, an' she queried an' pressed,
An' I said Mr. Denton was all right, I guessed,
An' leastwise givin' waiters a posey or two
Was the worstest misdeed ever *I* seen him do.
Lord! I wouldn't *stan'* it! This hotel of mine
'S a *respectable house* es you ever'll find,
An' a *lady* like me wouldn't feel much inclined
To have it disgraced. My own grandfather——"

"Yes.
Many thanks, my dear Madam——I'll go now I guess."
And he bowed himself out, through the hall, lighted dim,
Followed by the young man who was waiting for him.

Why go into the details of thoughts pro and con
Which cemented the union of Nora and John?
'Tis a story of alternate trusting and doubt,
The very same story we all know about.
'Tis a story all know, with its joys and its fears,
And its heavenly raptures commingled with tears.
Would that *all* love affairs found an ending as bright,
With as noble a colonel commanding the fight.
Do we need still an outline of how it was done,
How Nora's doubt vanished and John's suit was won?
When John came to see him the colonel explained
The calls he had made and the knowledged he'd gained.

Then a short-hand report, all type-written, he read,
Of all that the fair Mrs. Shattock had said,
(Written back in the corner, where shadows were dim,
By the solemn young man who was waiting for him).
It was signed by the clerk and the good colonel, both,
It was duly acknowledged and witnessed, on oath.
This paper John handed to Nora, and she
Was a penitent sweetheart as ever could be.
Unnatural lying and deceptive art
Had tried to manœvre two lovers apart,
But a brain, older, stronger, the pathway had crossed
And won them the battle, where they would have lost.

CHAPTER 11.

With a dashing young girl or a saucy coquette
The better you treat her, the meaner she'll get.
But a fellow will make the mistake of his life
If he thinks that this maxim applies to a wife,
If you marry a woman who's noble and true,—
Whom you know that you love and you're certain loves you,
Then the measure of bliss you will win as your meed
Will depend, in large measure, on how you proceed.
If of love and attention she never has dearth
You will probably find her an angel on earth.
If you slight and neglect her, or e'er go about
With a sweet smile for others, then, Brother, look out.
If your wife be the highest in womanly grace
Then her smile and her kiss will be apt to give place
To a sneering, sarcastic, and fault-finding way
That will ruin your home as a good place to stay.
She will scold you, upbraid you, from evening till dawn
Till the peace of your fire-side is totally gone.
If, perchance, your wife's conscience should have less to say,
And you still flirt with others or oft are away,
Of other men's smiles there will not be a lack,
And your poor, lonely wife will be apt to smile back.
In either case, Brother, the maxim will hold,—
If you value your home, be not absent, nor cold.
No sage ever more solemn maxim can tell.
If you have a home, *stay there*:—attend to it well.

For the tenth of October the wedding was set.
Nora now was completely determined,—and yet

In the weeks intervening before the glad day,
When Denton was with her, she often would say
How much brighter this happiest time of her youth
Had her mother been honest, and told her the truth.
It is hard to see children go reckless and wild.
It is worse to see mother untrue to her child.

John rented a house from the colonel. 'Twas small,
But was large enough, surely, to hold more than all
That Denton could purchase. His father appeared
And with humble assistance the cozy nest cheered.
A huge load of stove-wood he brought from the farm,
Saying "Nests are more comfortable when they are warm."
Of potatoes and apples a plentiful store,
He brought pumpkins, and cider, and squashes galore.
Then he and John's mother selected, apace,
The whole kitchen outfit and put it in place.
And the honest old man, as he loosened the strings
Of his old leather wallet, to pay for the things,
Was thoroughly happy, and said to his wife
That he "guessed John was purty well started in life."
And with every comfort the cottage they stored
Which their love could devise and their purse could afford.
Yet ever there present, as near came the day,
And even more anxious and thoughtful than they,
Was the colonel. He helped John with every plan
The same as he had since his courtship began.
Abler far than the father,—as kind and as true,
He often said "Johnny, we'll see this thing through."
Then again he would stand, with his gaze far away,

And when Denton came near him "Well, Johnny," he'd say,
"She's a girl in a million. I hope you'll enjoy
All the comfort that earth has for mortals, my boy."
He was kind as a father, devoted and mild,
As firm as a rock, and as meek as a child.

Nora's mother had yielded,—had finally said
That beneath her own roof should her daughter be wed.
In the *role* of a martyr as such people will,
She helped in no manner,—she merely kept still.

The wedding day came. A half dozen were there.
The brief words were said, and a short, honest prayer.
As Denton the senior kissed Nora, a bride,
He handed his son, smiling there by her side,
A nicely-filled purse. As his son's joy he read,
"Be happy my children. God bless you," he said.
John's mother, in old-fashioned, matronly way,
Welcomed Nora, in all that a mother could say.
And then in a chilly and martyr-like air,
Came the formal hand shaking of Mrs. St. Clair.
And lastly the colonel, with dignified grace,
Calmly handed to Nora a deed of the place
John had rented. He offered no kiss to the bride.
He shook hands with both but his tongue remained tied.
He was smiling and bright, but had nothing to say.
He stood in the back-ground, and soon went away.

Two days in Detroit the bridal pair spent

Then snug in their own little cottage content,

With no airy fancies or ambitious rife,
They at once settled down to their work-a-day life.
On the night of the nineteenth John's parents were there
To supper, as also was Mrs. St. Clair.
The colonel refused, though reluctantly, quite.
He intended to start for Chicago that night.
And some matters of business detained him. Quite late,
When they sat in the parlor, a little past eight
The colonel appeared, and "Say Johnny," quoth he,
"I would like you to come down and visit with me
In the way that we used to. My train goes at three.
You will not very often be with me, my boy,
In the jolly old way that we used to enjoy.
I have got to give *you* up, the same as the rest
Of the brightness that ever my loneliness blessed.
Your mother will be here with Nora tonight.
Come down and we'll smoke in the grate's ghostly light.'
His voice sounded strangely, like some little boy
In sorrow would plead for a coveted toy.
John consulted with Nora. She told him to go
And so they decided between them, although
They said to each other they'd never have guessed
That the colonel would make such a funny request.
John went with the colonel. They sat by the fire
As of old,——as the colonel expressed his desire.
After moments of silence "Well Johnny," said he,
"'Twas a crazy request to come down here with me
But I wanted to tell you——I meant to before——
That we never will sit here and smoke any more

And some things there are that I wanted to say,——
To *you*, boy, in private, before I go 'way.
Yes, I'm coming back, Johnny,—that is— I don't know.
I want you to listen now, for, when I go,
I may not remember——its *you*, don't you see,
That I wanted to talk about——never mind *me*——.
I want you, my boy, to avoid the mistake
Which young, thoughtless husbands so frequently make.
Do not court the destruction of peaceful home life
By giving too little of care to your wife.
Do not grow inattentive, as many men do.
Expecting your wife to be faithful to you
In each thought and act. You have won. Now be wise.
Your wife is an angel:——take care of your prize."
"Why, Colonel," said John, "I do not understand
What *care* you advise that a wife would demand,
For surely you wouldn't presume to infer
That Nora needs *watching*. I'll take no such slur,——
Not even from *you*."

"Come now Johnny, be cool.
Don't misunderstand me and act like a fool.
If now, here, this evening, a word can be said
Which may serve as a warning for you, years ahead,
And can save you and Nora one moment of pain
It is well worth the time, Johnny. I will explain."
He was silent some moments, then spoke. "Johnny, say,
Tell me—how many evenings have you been away
In the week you've been married?"

"Why,—*four*, but I——"

"Yes,

I thought so. Well now I can tell you, I guess,
So you'll see what I mean,——your home and your wife
Are your dearest posessions in this earthly life.
Let your Club, and your band, and your Order be thrown
To the winds. *They're for men who are living alone.*
Nora lives but to grant what your wishes demand,
But there's limit, in time, to what *angels* will stand,
And *neglect* can destroy the affection of youth
If *anything* can. Yes my boy, that's the truth.
Woman's heart has a void naught but kindness can fill.
If her husband don't pet her some other man will.
Many wives have been false to ~~there~~ marital oath
Who were starving for kisses, or kindness, or both,
When a few more caresses,—a little more love
Would have kept them as pure as the angels above,
And we never shall know till the last judgement day
Who is *really* to blame for their going astray.
The woman who cannot be tempted is such
That for wife and companion she's not good for much.
Nora's warm and affectionate, loving and true,
And *at home*, after tea, is the best place for you."
Denton 'rose from his chair and went pacing the floor,
Then he came and confronted the colonel once more.
"You are right on that, Colonel, as *always* you are,
And your warning may save me a family jar
At some time in the future. Say,—what do boys do
Who *have* no good friend and advisor like you?"
"They *suffer*, as *I've* suffered. If I had known
In youth what I now do, I'd never have grown
So bitter and cynical. That's cruel fate.

Man seldom learns wisdom until it's too late.
See to it that *your* life be not overcast
By blunders and sorrow, boy,—mine has gone past.
Avoid all these errors you see in *my* life.
Now Johnny, go home to your brave little wife.
Take care of her, cherish her, love her, my friend.
Devote your life to her, until life shall end,
And if ever I've helped you, my boy, in the fight,
Remember the old colonel sometimes. Good night."

John Denton went home. With the lamp burning dim
Nora sat in her rocking-chair, waiting for him.
They sat there and talked before going to bed
And he told to her all that the colonel had said.
Tears came to her eyes in a moment, and she
Came close to her husband and sat on his knee,
And the love-light shone brighter, perhaps, for the tear
As she said "You *will* stay with me evenings, dear?"
As he looked in her face Denton's own eyes would fill,
And he answered her softy, "Yes Nora, I will."

CHAPTER 12.

Is there truth in the omens of mystical lore,
And do coming events cast their shadows before?
Do invisible forces announce to the mind
The tangible *fact* but a short way behind
Like the dull floating clouds and the air murky warm
And the hot puffy breezes, are earnests of storm?

Nora woke from her sleep, heard the clock striking four,
And imagined she heard a faint knock at the door.
She awakened her husband; both listened; and then,
Distinct and impatient, it sounded again.
John called "*Who is there?*" ere he lifted the latch.
Prompt came the reply "*Western Union despatch.*"
John opened and read, by a candle's dim light,
"*Number nine west-bound wrecked on the Grand Trunk tonight—*
Nichols crossing——no limit amount we will use
Take first special——rush copy.

EVENING NEWS."

With the coolness and nerve of a newspaper man
John started, while dressing, to make out a plan
And mode of proceedure. "This clock is too slow.
It is now nearly five—there is no way to go
Except by the *Trunk*. There is nothing to do
But to go down and wait till there's something comes through."
As, five minutes later, he lifted the latch,
He met a small boy with another despatch.
It said "*Nichols——ten-twenty——four-fifty-two——*
Colonel Warren hurt fatally——says wire you."

Nora picked up both messages, silently read,
And then laid them down, and "Good by, dear," she said.
Denton hastily kissed her and down-town he sped.

For an hour and a half John could do naught but wait
And anxiously wonder about Colonel's fate.
Then a special train came, and with sorrow intent,
To the terrible scene of disaster he went.
'Twas a "head-on" collision. "Thirteen," going east,
Left the Battle Creek depot, and slowly increased,
Its speed till, at Nichols, with thunderous din,
She sighted the fast "Number nine," coming in.
Then came the collision. The two engines 'rose
With their noses together, up-ended, and those
In the coaches on "Thirteen" escaped with a fright.
A few received injuries, but they were slight.
The two forward coaches of "Nine" telescoped,
And there, in grim chaos, the poor wretches groped.
The oil lamps were broken, the ruins caught fire,
And never was terror or torture more dire.
People were pinned in the ruins and *cooked*,
While upon them, in helplessness, bystanders looked.
When Denton arrived, the worst terror was through,
And there really was little remaining to do
Toward easing the sufferers. Somebody said
Warren still was alive,—at the hotel,—in bed.

John soon found the colonel, his face pale and white,
But his grey eyes still filled with a good-natured light.
John stepped to the bedside. "Well, Colonel," said he,

"You are not as bad off as I feared you would be.
I will get you back home and it won't take you long
Until you'll be yourself again, hearty and strong."
"No Johnny, sit down here,—there's nothing to do.
My limbs are all mangled,—the battle is through.
I keep growing weaker, with every breath,
And I only am lying here waiting for death.
I am glad you came, Johnny,—the finish is near
And the solemn Death Angel is almost here.
I scarcely can realize, Johnny, that I
Am mortally wounded and quickly must die.
But Johnny, I'm thankful my labors are o'er.
I have suffered enough. To have suffered much more
Might have made me grow bitter. I've struggled to be
What I *thought* that my Maker demanded of me.
I have nothing to live for. I don't want to stay,
I am glad I am through and am going away.
I have suffered and struggled, my bravest and best,
And I look upon Death with a feeling of rest.
Like a convict whose term has expired, and he
Rejoices to know that he soon will be free,
So have I served my sentence the best that I could
A hopeless, life-sentence of bachelorhood,
A sentence imposed by the Powers above
When my only crime was an honest love;
A love so deep, so strong, so true
That I couldn't recover, as others do
When thwarted and beaten. For thirty years
A second's warning would bring the tears
At any discussion of love, or life

In a sunny home, with a happy wife.
Many's the girl whom I *might* have wed
And changed the miserable life I led,
But I didn't love them, and wouldn't make
A business contract for comfort's sake
I thought, if I did, some evil sprite
Would haunt my beside every night
To tell of the love that I might have had,
And I thought the torture would drive me mad.
Every carefully cherished plan,
The passion that lives in a healthy man,
The refining help that a home can bring,
And crowning Love,—all,—*everything*
That makes Life's labor a thing divine,—
All were for others—they were not mine.
My life's been a torture. As some starved child,
With eyes dilated and staring wild
Looks in at a bakery,—so did I
With *seeing* the coveted prizes, try
To think me satisfied, as I'd roam,
And know some *friend*, with a happy home.
To a true, honest mind, I suppose the next best
To being of happiness fully possessed
Is to *have* a dear friend, and to help *him* attain
The measure of happiness we cannot gain
And yet I suppose it is equally true
That the finest of torture man ever went through
Is to live where he warms with his every breath
That for which his own spirit is starving to death.
I have tried, many times, to love someone I knew

Would make me as noble a wife, and as true,
As could any woman alive,—but no,
There was something lacking—it wouldn't go,
And the same old ghost of a love that's past
Has stayed to torture me till the last.
So, as far's I'm concerned, it is all right, you see,
'Bout this accident, Johnny,—don't fret over *me*.
Yes,—I *am* growing weak, but I want you to stay,
While I visit life out in the same social way
That we always have talked when you came to my room,
I don't like the usual sadness and gloom
Of a death-bed—and Johnny,—'tis not hard to die,
And a *mighty* sight better to laugh than to cry.
N—no,——I have no relations to send for:——they're dead.
And——I——don't think I want any prayers to be said.
I never *did* pray very much, anyhow,
And its rather too late to begin at it now.
Well,——give us your hand, Johnny,——there boy,——don't cry!
I may have a *home* in the next world.——Good-by."
A bright ray of light o'er the pillow was shed
Where Denton lay weeping. The colonel was dead.

My story is finished. Your interest would wane
If further, in detail, I paused to explain.
When the colonel was buried, there came, to attend,
Poor people who said that the dead was their friend,
And instances then came to light, not a few,
Of kindnesses done, which no one ever knew,
Of coal he had given, of schooling he'd paid
Of deserving young men he had started in trade,—

And many and many he'd helped in dark hours
Came, weeping, and covered him over with flowers.

On his library table, and unfolded still,
The ink fresh upon it, they found Colonel's will,
Where himself he had penned it, his last living night,
After sending John home, with advice that was right.
The singular preamble went on to state,
And in simple, original way to relate
That the testator had, by the rulings of Fate,
Been always unhappy, and that he had been
For a score of years past, without family or kin;
That a weak-hearted woman had ruined his life;
That Mrs. John Denton, in similar strife,
Had proven by action heroic the fact
That women *have* love, by true sentiment backed.
The document further proceeded to say
That he loved Mr. Denton as true father may
Love a promising son; and that therefore he, there,
Being then of sound mind, did bequeath and declare
His entire estate, when he quitted this life,
To his young friend John Denton and Nora, his wife.

As to Mrs. St. Clair, there is little to say.
She called on the young folks, but day after day
She grew more officious and meddling. She tried
In small ways to make Nora dissatisfied
With her home and her husband. She criticised John
For every defect she could lay eyes upon.

And finally, though much in patience he bore,
John told her she needn't come there any more,
And Nora sustained him. Then Mrs. St. Clair,
With a pious, reproachful, and martyr-like air,
Evolved a new theory and fixed up a plan
About Genesis, and the Creation of Man,
And she wrote a long tract, and in every church
For ten miles around she continued a search
For some one to listen to her while she read,
And she argued it with them until they were dead.

John and Nora lived happily. Never a jar
Came into their home, its true love-light to mar.
John was kind and attentive as lover could be
And Nora e'en gentler and kinder than he.
More than once it occurred that when Nora was ill
Would her pretty mouth quiver, her handsome eyes fill,
And "John," she would say "how I wish that I, too,
Had my mother to help me, as other girls do."
John would answer "Naught, Darling, would better suit me.
But still you know, Nora, just how it would be."
"Yes, I know," Nora'd say. "She would make trouble here.
You'll stay at home with me today—won't you dear?"
Sometimes John would ask if she ever felt yet
For her true love's decision a bitter regret,
Or wished that in those times of doubt, dark and dim,
She had clung to her mother instead of to him.
Her reply would be "No, John, the step I took then
I would do with much less hesitation again.

For when Reason can sanction what Impulse would say,
When Judgement can follow where Love leads the way,
Strong hearts will stand true, through the most bitter fight,
And the marriage that follows is honest and right."

THE END.

For when Reason can awaken what Impulse would arrest.
When Judgement can follow where Love leads the way
Strong hearts will stand firm through the coarse bitter night,
And the mariner that follows is blessed and right."

The Isle.

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